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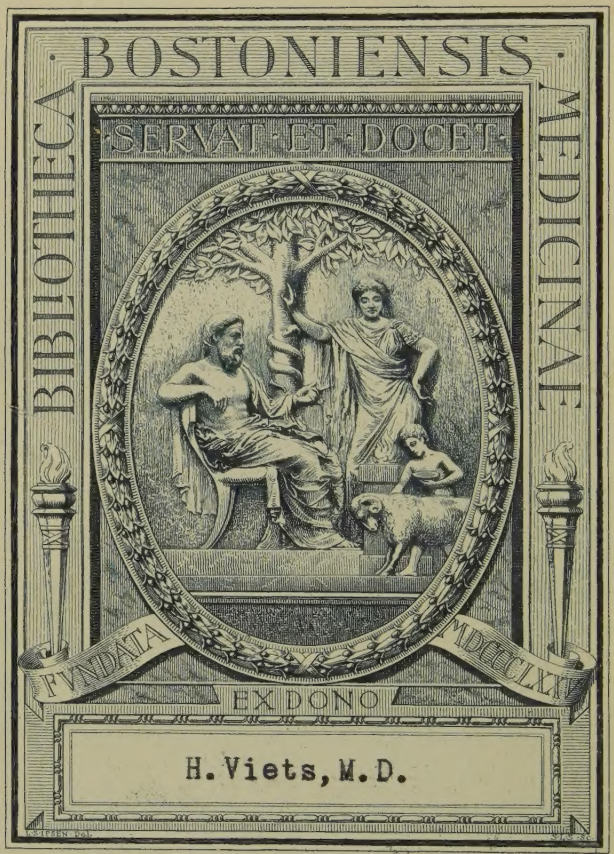
Not Speaking of Operations

JOHN FINCH BARNHILL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NOT SPEAKING OF OPERATIONS

Not Speaking of Operations

By

John Finch Barnhill, F.A.C.S.

1925
THE STRATFORD COMPANY, *Publishers*
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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The STRATFORD CO., Publishers
Boston, Mass.

I. G. 231.

Printed in the United States of America

Introduction

SEVERAL years ago the writer chanced to read a little booklet by a well known story writer entitled "Speaking of Operations." He hoped some one might write an answer. Since no one did this feeble attempt was made while on vacation, under an umbrella on the sand beach at Santa Monica.

The incidents of the little story are largely true, and occurred in the actual experience of the author. In small part the thought was gathered from newspapers, as the story of the snakes.

While covering a period of several years, and of occurrences in more than one institution, all are connected as though taking place in a few weeks and at one hospital.

Nick, Billy, Peggy, Aunt Johnnie and others were actual patients in hospitals. It might be argued that a child so badly deformed as Nick could not have been so active as described; but that he was more so is amply attested.

Aunt Mandy was the quaint, observing, philosophical negress depicted, and is of a type now rapidly passing.

All others herein mentioned were real personages connected in some way with hospital life, and did substantially the things stated of them. Colonel Cuttom was an eminent surgeon with all the estimable characteristics and qualifications attributed to him. Dr. Richard Smith illustrates the fact that when surgeons are themselves operated, they, also, are entirely human.

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CHAPTER I

I Become Ill

A MODEST sign on my office door reads Richard Smith, Surgeon. Because of a long period of practice, overtime hours and the total avoidance of vacations I had finally secured a commendable professional following. I had a few times heard the rumor that Doctor Smith had become a busy man. To meet all the strictly professional demands on my time it was necessary to cut my connection first with this club, then that one until finally I was entirely free to devote my time to my books, to the hospital, to teaching and writing.

For some reason never quite understood by myself, my name and pedigree already occupied a short paragraph in "Who's Who." I was clearly becoming a slave to duty and ambition without realizing it. Strong men may be prodigal of health for a time, but even those of perfect physique may go only so far until finally they must realize, as I did, that what seems an impregnable bodily resistance, may in due time be overcome by continued, unremitting application to

a cause, however congenial and necessary, and ultimately end in a bankrupt state of health. This was exactly what was happening to me, for it seemed a first duty to solve every new problem of surgery, but it never occurred to me that rest hours as well as work hours were equally necessary to the accomplishment of this end.

Lately patients of an observing character and kindly disposition had sometimes stated that I looked jaded and that I should without delay take a long vacation. I had, they said most confidentially, recently exhibited unaccountable tendencies to irritation, and was, in their opinion, losing that indefinable but prized and valuable something called diplomacy which is so necessary to the surgeon in successfully managing patients.

To my own dismay I had to acknowledge that something was wrong with me. The twenty-four hours of uninterrupted work which one must occasionally devote to the practice of surgery were, when such emergency arose, becoming more wearisome than I liked. For a year, possibly longer, I had suffered slightly from a nagging pain in my side, which on one or two occasions became so severe I had to take to bed for a few hours, when worst luck of all, I must miss many important and pressing engagements.

While these occasions of confinement to bed gave ample opportunity to contemplate what an ass I was making of myself, invariably, so soon as the severe pain was over, I engaged madly in the task of completing some surgical paper which had long ago been started and then neglected, or in dictating answers to correspondents whose communications had been heaped upon my desk awaiting attention at some chance leisure moment.

Strangely enough whenever my very confidential friends had mentioned and insisted on my taking a vacation, without exception each had ended his solicitous argument with some statement, which usually amounted to a command, "Of course we do not expect you to take this entirely essential rest just now, because Mary Jane, or Elizabeth Ann or John Henry, who needs your surgical skill, and who would trust no one else in all the world, has arranged to enter the hospital soon, and none of our family or friends could ever forgive you if you left before the period of danger is certainly passed." To one whose profession finally becomes a sort of sacred duty, whose large practice always has one or more Mary Janes or Elizabeth Anns on the waiting list, and with one's very closest friends insisting on personal attention

to each, a vacation seems wholly out of the question.

My last attack of pain had left me weakened and with a persistent tender area in my side. When I re-read one morning the paper I had written for the National Society the previous night, I was alarmed to note what trivialities it contained. I clearly was not normal. I therefore determined to consult Doctor John Cuttom, my old schoolmate and lifelong surgical friend.

Doctor Cuttom was a jolly good fellow and a great surgeon, greater than I because of better education, greater endurance and the possession of what may be called the true surgical instinct. He was never without a new joke which he mirthfully narrated at the proper time and place. In conversation he was always frank to strangers, usually ironical to his friends, and took great pleasure in "putting the latter into a hole" in any argument, at which art he was unusually gifted. Although a member of the medical faculty of a great university he never liked the title of Professor. When so addressed he invariably would remonstrate and say, "Charlatans and dog trainers are all called professors. Call me just plain Colonel. I was born in Kentucky, and anyway, the name sounds better to me than professor."

When he personally answered my telephone call and understood that it was I who wished the interview, he ironically asked, "Well, do you wish to borrow more money, pay your last loan, or, have you finally gathered enough sense to go with me next week for a month's fishing?" When I told him none of these were wanted, but that I wished to consult him about my own person, he answered with an assumed roughness and a thinly veiled tone of irritation that he was very busy, had about as many "dead heads" as he could carry in one day, but since he had believed for some time that I was not entirely sane, that I certainly needed a guardian, he would consent, in my case, to see me at once, especially since he had longed for the sport of investigating my exterior by a proper series of punches, jabs and knocks.

Doctor Cuttom was for lay patients a most difficult man to interview. Engagements could not be made and a diplomatic secretary enforced as best she could the rule of sending patients into his presence according to turn. Men and women of high and low degree, of urgent business or no business, were obliged to sit out weary hours of waiting, to listen to much growling from the impatient, and to study for the fiftieth time, perhaps,

the portraits of great surgeons past and present, that adorned the office walls. Professional etiquette enabled me to pass by this crowd directly into the presence of the Colonel. From his secretary I have since learned of the unfavorable, and some ugly, comment among those waiting, after my triumphant, unearned, easy access.

"Well, come right in, you old rogue," Cuttom said with assumed rudeness. "Have seen a lot of cases to-day that would interest you mightily. Operated one—"

"Oh, you don't need to waste your energies on any classical description of cases," I said, holding my side and no doubt looking peeved at his apparent lack of sympathy for me in my distress, "I—"

"Not at all necessary to tell me about it, old man," he interrupted more cordially, indicating an easy chair. "I've noticed what a fool you've been for a long time. I knew you'd appear at my fount of wisdom sooner or later, but I'm a bit puzzled to know how you've put it off so long. A really good man ailing as you have been would have died long ago. Guess yours was a special dispensation to allow proper preparation," he added, emphasizing the last of the sentence.

"That's probably true," I replied, "but on the ground of preparation you couldn't die in any reasonable time, unless the preparation were unduly forced," I answered, irritated by his levity.

Following my surgical knowledge of what preliminary preparation is necessary to the examination, I had already disrobed and stretched myself upon the examining table.

"Trouble in the right inguinal region?" he asked as he no doubt observed I was shielding my side. "Noticed you at the Medical Society last week. Walked like a chicken with a frozen foot. Nice, secretive friend you are! Fine proposition to come around here when you're nine-tenths dead and expect me to pull you—"

A sharp pain caused me to double up and groan, interrupting Cuttom's ironical, but sweetly sympathetic scolding.

"Looks like an appendix, don't it?" he continued. "Pull up your legs more," he said, beginning the examination. "Relax yourself a bit, you stiff! Think I can find the trouble as easy as a Chiro', do you? Not much, sir; relax more. There, that's more like a real man," he went on as he edged the outside of his right hand gently though deeply into my aching groin, much as one

might use a dull spade as a lever. Then he placed the border of his left hand parallel to the right, meanwhile manipulating the deep, intervening structures between the two. I squirmed from the pain and moved my hands toward his in an involuntary effort to protect myself, groaning the while, and begging him to be careful.

"You old hysteric," he growled. "Think I would do wisely to stop right here, let you have your way, and die. Would probably be a fine thing for a lot of your patients if I did! Hold quiet a minute, I say. Now there! grit your teeth, old man. Now I have it," he exclaimed in a tone of exultation as he shoved his right hand yet more deeply and brought it almost into contact with the left. "That's the stuff, relax I say! That's better. Can feel a big lump in your side, oh, hold still, won't you? Children and old women have more nerve than you. Just like a doctor, though. Never treated a saw bones yet who wasn't white livered, but you're— Yes, a big lump, probably chronic appendix, maybe with abscess. Can't understand anyone, least of all a surgeon, an eminent surgeon too, by crackie, going on and on for a year or more like the fool you have been and saying nothing to your eager, anxious, loving doctor friends until

you are about all in! I shall x-ray you and make some laboratory tests to ascertain additional facts, but I already know you must be operated as soon as you can be properly prepared."

"You don't mean I must be operated?" I managed to ask feebly between paroxysms of pain. "Is there no other way out?"

"Oh yes, there are other ways out," he replied, disgustedly. "You know these ways as well as I. Had a fine illustration only last week. A spineless mollusk like yourself asked your very question under similar circumstances. Before I could answer, his thin faced, smiling wife answered in a piping, squeaky voice, 'Yes, Science!' I was not permitted to operate, 'Science' failed, and the unfortunate man has been gathered to the Fathers. In your case you have played idiot long enough," he exclaimed in a determined manner, "and it's now time for me to take the rudder of the sinking ship."

He took down the receiver of the telephone and called a familiar number,—the hospital where I have labored so many years.

"Yes, this is Doctor Cuttom," he spoke into the transmitter. "Am sending Doctor Richard Smith in for emergency operation. Engage Miss White

to nurse him, and instruct her to carry out my rules of preparation."

Turning from the 'phone he held out his hand to me, and in the most kindly, sympathetic voice said, "You shall have my best care, and will pull through all right. Doctors know too little about themselves and too much about surgery to make good patients, but you shall be a man from now on, for I'm your boss." Then, his old irony returning, he continued: "One thing I must insist upon, namely, that you avoid altogether as long as you are in the hospital all references to operations, either of your own or of others. This habit, obsession, craze, idiocy or whatever it is that has caused our patients of late to go totally bug-house, to bunch up on all occasions as soon as convalescence will permit, and to spend their whole time *speaking of operations,* has got to stop before most of them become plain nuts. Your influence, because of your reputation and diplomatic way of handling people should be helpful in breaking up this silly talk. I shall therefore command you to start the counter irritant of *not speaking of opertions.*"

He pressed my hand in a most friendly way and then with a smile and a wink added, "I mean

exactly what I have said concerning this infernal 'speaking of operations' gossip. If I hear of you falling in with that *lunacy stuff I shall either poison or drown you.*"

"You need have no fear on that score, Cuttom," I answered. "I, too, have observed this idiotic tendency in our patients, and hold views similar to yours. I certainly can play sane on that point, at least."

CHAPTER II

I Am Operated

THE day of my operation was for me divided into periods of mists, dense fog and total darkness. My recollection of what happened is, accordingly, as I now try to recall it, slightly blurred, much obscured and totally blank. Once or twice during the preceding night Miss White, my nurse, administered anodyne mixtures, which caused some sleep, and were, no doubt, responsible for the somewhat confused mentality of the early morning hours.

On awakening from a restless sleep I heard a low, droning, rhythmical hum, accompanied by a regular, more or less musical tapping on the floor. Rubbing my eyes I noted that the nurse was away, perhaps at breakfast, and that there stood, almost before me, a negress black as night who was humming a familiar camp meeting tune with which she kept accurate time by beating on the floor with one foot. No doubt she was the maid who had come to care for my room. She stood with her back to me and was polishing the mirror above my dressing table.

As I watched more closely and listened more attentively I noted that she also marked time with the motion of her head, and of hand and cloth, as well as with her foot. I could see her face in the mirror as she worked and bobbed her body, and I felt sure that she was able to see and study me. Finally after much rubbing, bobbing of the head and beating the floor with her foot she stopped suddenly, turned to face me and abruptly asked, with a little curtsy, "When yo' all goin' ter be op'rated?"

In my dazed state, due to the opiates, I hesitated but finally replied, "Why I'm not going to be—"

"Yes yo' is," she said, emphatically. "Yes yo' is. Ever-body on dis flooh is goin' be op'rated. Dis am de mos' op'ratinest flooh ah evah see. Yas suh! Misto Khyarter, de rich young man in de nex' room, an' done give me a big white money shiner ev'ry mornin' fo' keepin' de room all a-shinin' lak, an' clean all de time,—Mist' Khyarter say he aint goin' have no op'ration—"

She paused, facing me, the cloth in one hand and the other punctuating the main points. She seemed greatly concerned as she continued:

"No he ain't goin' be op'rated he say to me ebery mawnin' when he han' me de shiner. But

ebery mawnin' Misto Khyarter say he doan sleep good no mo' an' he have mo' pain an' sufferin' dan de night befor', twell bye um bye he look like he shore am gwine ter die, an' finumally he feel mos' so bad he plum fergit ter give me any mo' money shiners. Ah done up an' say Misto' Khyarter, yo' certainly is mouty bad sick. When yo' all goin' be op'rated an git well, an' git yo' reasonin' back?"

She hesitated a moment no doubt to note the effect of her words. It was evident Aunt Mandy wished to impress me with the liberality of Mr. Carter in the matter of tips. I also inferred that the rich young man had grown so very ill that he "forgot," as she expressed it, to give her more "money shiners." This fact was of such moment that she urged operation hoping that his "memory" might thereby be restored, and with it a return of the ever welcome gratuities. Since I had neglected her in matters of finance she probably thought I too, should be operated immediately. She might have cleared her meaning, had she been permitted, for she attempted to say more, but was interrupted by the entrance of Miss White and the orderly who came with the car to take me to the operating room.

A book had recently appeared in which was pointed out the value of preventing and overcoming any undue apprehension on the part of patients who are approaching the time of operation. In his much quoted review of this work I remembered that Colonel Cuttom expressed the belief that the advice given in the book would be found exceedingly useful in cases of hysterical women, spoiled children and doctors, more especially surgical doctors. I therefore felt certain that the Colonel had requested every one connected with my case to observe strictly the advice in the book.

Accordingly when in the anaesthetic room, the nurses, anaesthetist, surgeon and assistant surgeons all spoke to me cordially, smiled and seemed as pleased as if starting on a favorite trip. Knowing the game as I did I was a bit irritated that they were playing it on me. Cuttom most graciously said, "Good morning, Mutt; nice rubber tired vehicle you rode up in; hope life always runs so smoothly with you." Another surgeon friend came in just long enough to greet me, wish me well but also to point out in his jolly mood that I was getting what was coming to me for all the wicked surgery I had been guilty of doing! Even the anaesthetist who said nothing showed not the

slightest sympathy or concern as he adjusted the mask to my face and poured a few drops of ether upon it.

Bewildered, I felt in my dazed state that I should certainly strangle and cease breathing as soon as the ether were fully applied. I therefore begged that it be given slowly, and removed altogether for a time if I requested.

"Now listen to that nonsense continued to the last," Cuttom broke in, apparently much irritated. "Listen to the patient, the great surgeon! Fine thing it would be to follow his advice now, wouldn't it? Smith has given barrels of ether to others, and you will all recall that the best article ever written on the use of ether was written by Dr. Richard Smith, our brave doctor hero patient this morning! In this article he states that 'ether must be given continuously and freely, that the patient must be restrained when necessary, and that when so given is efficient and safe.' Proceed with the anaesthetic according to Smith's approved method. Let him take his own medicine according to the letter of his advice in his now famous article!"

"All right, breathe deeply," said the mild mannered anaesthetist as he poured on the ether and applied the mask over my face. "Don't hold your

breath. Breathe deeply, I say! No, you're not smothering," he said as I remonstrated. "Now another long breath! Another! That's better! Another, another."

I knew the routine in this hospital completely. At eight o'clock each morning many of the nurses came from breakfast to a little improvised chapel, where they sang and had devotional exercises before going on duty. The chapel was immediately under the operating room, and for years I had heard the girls singing there as I began my eight o'clock surgery. It was just eight o'clock now and as I commenced to take the ether myself on this particular morning, I heard them laughing as they gathered in the chapel below. Someone touched the keys of the piano, and then all began to sing. What was it I was hearing? Surely I am already affected by the ether and am losing my senses! "Breathe deeper, please," I heard from the anaesthetist as he poured on more ether. From the chapel below came the words of the song as from out the mists of the far away, *"Now I draw my fleeting breath."* The words fastened themselves to my partly stupefied brain with a terrible grip. "I do not wish to draw my 'fleeting breath,' " I reasoned. "I must continue to breathe common air which has always been satisfactory, and in the

good old fashioned way," I determined, and hence began to struggle with all my remaining power to dislodge the ether mask. "Nurse, hold the doctor's hands," the anaesthetist commanded, when by a desperate effort I was about to free myself.

Finding myself restrained I held my breath until again the command of the anaesthetist shot cross-fire through my weakened senses, "Breathe deeply! Don't hold your breath! Deeply, I say, deeply!"

Colonel Cuttom undoubtedly heard the words of the song, witnessed my struggle and, realizing the ill effect the situation must have upon his apprehensive patient at this critical moment, began to shuffle his feet to drown the singing, while at the same time he commanded the anaesthetist to crowd the ether to the limit. However, having once gotten the swing of the song into a brain which was fast losing all power of control, other sounds seemed only to emphasize the rhythmic motion of the words from below, which now came almost like the booming of tidal waves, "Now I draw my fleeting breath. Now—I close—my eyes in————death."

Interminably mixed and twisted were the anaesthetist's commands, "Oh! Doctor, don't hold your breath! Deeper, deeper, deeper, please! That's

better; deeper now!" Then there was further mixing, blending, confusion of what the anaesthetist said with the words of the song, but out of it all, and above it all still continued the words, "Now I rise—to—to—heights————un—un—"

The mists were thickening, thickening, thickening. Soon all was total blackness:—complete general anaesthesia. In this state of my oblivion Doctor Cuttom did his kindly, painstaking, skillful work.

The total oblivion into which the anaesthetic plunged me seems now, as I reflect upon it in the sober moments of convalescence, not to have been entirely unpleasant. Although wholly unconscious to all that Doctor Cuttom did during that, to me, important hour, I have the feeling that throughout it all there continued a subconscious state expressive of great joy. I can not account for this Elysian condition on any hereditary or acquired trend of normal mentality because all my people, and, most of all I myself, are most sober minded. Perhaps it may be accounted for by the law of opposites, and that during the strange and complete cessation of the normal, due to the anaesthetic, an entirely and wholly unusual subconscious activity of the mind continues. However it may be, as soon as the total blackness that en-

gulfed me during the anaesthesia began to clear, and to be succeeded by a dense yet slightly penetrable fog, I who almost never laugh, began to do so uproariously. I was obsessed by the thought that I had been somewhere, anywhere, or perhaps was it nowhere, and had seen and heard many comic things; all presented in such rapid succession that there was not nearly enough time to laugh at each one separately and sufficiently. Over and over again during the relapses into deeper stupor which are characteristic of one's efforts to throw off the strange and paralyzing power of anaesthesia, I questioned myself millions and multiplied millions of times so it seemed to me, as to my whereabouts, and what had happened. Who was it that slowly, faster, rapidly, so rapidly I could not always catch the words was saying, "breathe, deeper, deeper, deep—"? Whence came the song, barely perceptible at first, then louder, louder until it fairly boomed into my ears, "Now I close my eyes—in death"? These words raced and tumbled and rearranged themselves with a terrible speed, but always ended in something unmistakably like "closing my eyes in death." Had I been dead? Was I awakening? Yes, here trip by the endless numbers of grotesque and irresistably funny people, which set me to laughing. I

then feel that I have been very silly, and laugh again at the thought of how very, very silly I have been. If I closed my eyes in death where was I? I laughed at the thought, if one may be supposed really to think when coming out from an anaesthetic. I must rouse myself, I determined. I must not be silly! I tried to sit up, tried to open my eyes, endeavored to orient myself. I felt sure I could see an angel, therefore it must be heaven. I stared intensely and I laughed ridiculously at the "angel." All was still enveloped in fog and I could make out but one angel.

Following my laughing paroxysm I was sure I heard Cuttom say, apparently addressing the nurse, "He's still drunk as a lord from the anaesthetic; just as well to let him have his hilarious way. Aren't doctors the limit when patients?"

"Oh, it's Doctor Cuttom," I managed to say, resuming my drunken laugh. "Col-nel Cut-tom's —my—friend. But I closed———my eyes in death," laughing again in a most silly manner. "No this—this aint,—no this aint heaven!" I bawled out. "We've got one angel, all right," I managed to explain, indicating Miss White. "But if that's Colonel Cut—tom, over there—, in that fog, —if that's my friend Cuttom, I say, then

this couldn't possibly be heaven. My friend—couldn't possibly be in heav—"

"Oh, stop that infernal jibbering," Doctor Cuttom interrupted. "You're too drunk to be interesting."

He was busy writing a prescription. "Miss White, give this medicine as directed and I think our patient will rest better and be sober enough by morning. The suggestive calamity in that nurses' song at the beginning of Dick's operation was a monstrous crime. I shall investigate it," I heard the Colonel say as he left the room.

Weeks later I learned from the Colonel the facts concerning this startling song incident. One of the nurses who knew me well, and who greatly enjoyed playing pranks, fancied it would be a splendid joke to impress me with the thought at the moment I began breathing the anaesthetic that it might be my last "fleeting breath" and that I might be "closing my eyes in death." Without realizing the evil consequences such suggestion might have at that moment she led on the piano, the other nurses joining in the song, but not knowing the moment was a critical period for me.

CHAPTER III

I Become Despondent

ON the morning of the sixth day after my operation I awakened feeling better, but to use the words of the Colonel, continued grumpy. I had the belief from the very first that my case was not going well. Cuttom said that I had determined that all should not go well, and intimated that I was doing my best to carry out the determination. I had to admit of course that my old pain was gone and that my appetite and strength were slowly returning, but despite this, and the assurances of the doctor at each visit that my progress was exceptional, I fancied I had detected a deceit in all he said. "Getting well exceptionally fast, old man," he remarked after his examination yesterday. "Bears out my assertion that your time hasn't come. Need more preparation for that event, you do."

Even with all these assurances I still fancied I was doing badly. My long surgical experience suggested the probability that the stitches would be removed to-day, and the thought worried me.

I felt absolutely sure, I argued, that my physical strength was unequal to the ordeal. Miss White had gone to breakfast and with her restraint removed I felt great inward worry and apprehension of impending calamity. I was beginning to fear that Doctor Cuttom had not done his work thoroughly; that he had not visited me often enough; that on the occasion of such visits he had not examined my condition critically, and that, therefore, he could not more than guess that I am "getting on exceptionally well."

I was summing up these, and I fear many other dire possibilities, when Aunt Mandy the black maid appeared, dust cloth in hand. Without paying the slightest attention to me she began humming a swinging, measured darkey tune. She stooped, straightened a small rug on the floor, turned back into its place a corner of the table cover that lay awry, and then set herself with all her energies to polishing the mirror. It seemed an age since I had last seen her engaged at this same task on the morning of my operation. What was it she was saying to me that morning when interrupted by Miss White's entrance? As Mandy now hummed, bobbed her head and kept time with the motions of the hand and foot, I tried vainly to recall her words. I lay with my eyes partly closed, appar-

ently asleep. I felt sure Mandy was studying the situation for she could see me clearly in the glass before her. She stopped humming and patting the floor and I thought I heard her mumbling something to herself. Although indistinct, and the words disjointed, I managed to understand something of what she said.

"Mist' Jones doan git no mo' shinin' an' polishin' in his room, he doan. Mist' Jones certumly done lose his reasinin'. Mist' Jones done clean fergit to han' me any 'shiners,' he do! Mist' Jones doan git no moh shinin' an' no moh polishin'. Oh no, Mist' Jones! yo' all doan git no moh fixups. Yo' entirely too fergitful, yo' is!"

I turned in bed and gave a little cough but immediately pretended sleep again. Mandy was now humming "Swing low, sweet chariot," as she studied me in the glass. She stopped humming, resumed her talk to herself, now more distinctly than before, and evidently intended for me.

"Ah had de mos' ludicrumust dream las' night, ah did," she mumbled. "Dreamed Doctah Smith done give me fifty shiners fo' cleanin' an' polishin' dis room. Ah specks, howsomover, dreams is mos'ly disappointnen. Specks Doctah Smith aint gwine ter give me moh dan twenty-five."

I coughed again. Mandy looked towards me and said, "Lordy, honey! Yo' all has been sleepin' lak a lil baby. Ah sees sick folks what is sick an' ah sees folks what aint sick, but only thinks dey is; an' de folks what thinks dey is when dey aint is de worstest sick folks dey is. Lawdy, Lawd! Doctah Smith! Yo' all is jis erbout well, only yo' doan peer ter know it. Yo' certainly is worryin' an' frettin' lak a chile erbout nothin'. Young Mist' Khyarter, in 105, stewed an' fretted an' do all he kin ter keep hisse'f from gittin' well aftah he been op'rated, an'———"

"None of that talk about operations," I said sharply, recalling the Colonel's injunction. "We can not listen to speaking of operations. Doctor Cuttom has emphatically forbidden any reference to the subject, and has threatened my life if I permit such discussion in my presence. He says if all the nonsensical talk about operations continues much longer it certainly will wreck the republic."

"Now doan' yo' all worry none erbout all dis op'ratnin talk, Mist'——Doctah Smith," she replied with some show of resentment. "Yo' all is gwine talk big erbout op'rations yo'se'f soon yo' able, an' glib nuff so yo' is entertainin'. Lawdy, what we all gwine talk erbout here ef it aint 'bout op'rations? All de time folks is comin' inter dis

here hospital f' op'rations, is a-waitin' erround to be op'rated, is recoverin' from op'rations, an' when dey's well enough to talk, dey nevah stop speakin' erbout op'rations long as dey live er kin pussuade dey frien's to lis'n. Lan' sakes no, honey! Aint no use yo' waistin' yo' precimous strength now tryin' to shut up de mouves of dem dats had op'rations. Dey all sho' would die to stop a right so nachul bohn. Dey would shorely bust tryin' ter hold in; dey would mos'——"

She paused for breath. It was evident that any threat to stop the much speaking of operations was to her a serious matter, and to be vigorously opposed.

Assuming a new attitude and with an assurance born of a knowledge of all the facts, she continued: "Befo' ah was drafted inter dis impohtant pusishun uv shinin' an' polishin' in dis hospital, an' listinin' to de convosashuns erbout op'rations, ah done do de scrubbin' an' cleanin' fo' de rich ole Doctah Patt'son. Doctah Patt'son aint nevah had no op'rations, but he done lak mightily ter fish. An' mohs de fac', it look lak when he fish he nevah git tired tellin' erbout how many fish he done ketch, an' what whoppers dey all is. When folks is op'rated, or when dey is been ketchin'

fish, it look lak dey nevah aint got no mo' respeck or feelin' fo' de trufe!"

I here reminded her that she began to tell me something about Mr. Carter in 105, but had gotten hopelessly entangled and off the subject in speaking of operations.

"Yas suh, Mist' Khyarter shorely do worry an' fret too much twell he doan sleep none an' look all bad an' lak he gwine ter die. Howsomever, one day when he mos' nearly dead from de frettin' an' de worry, in come de fines' an' purtiess' an' mos' han'somes' young lady ah evah see, an' she smile and laugh, an' toss her lovely head, an' talk sweet twell presumptly he is all smilin' fo' de fustest time since he done been op'rated. Den she open a lil box dat look lak a coffin an' tuk out a ol' banjo an' play, sweet lak foh him. An' by um by when de music she make fo' him begins co'sin' an' thrubbin' through 'im, an' when it finumally gits inter de inside uv 'im whar de laughin' place is at, he laugh out loud lak he nevah ain't gwine ter be grouchy no mo'. You all needs a int'duction to de thrubbin' uv de banjo, or de sweet, purty—"

Mandy broke off her advice suddenly, and began polishing a bit of near-by furniture. Her quick ears had detected the approach of visitors. Doctor Cuttom entered and addressed me in a gruff,

though most friendly voice. "Well, how's my star patient, my worst old grouch this morning? Still determined to die are you? No, I know you don't want to die, but you've determined to make the closest possible shave and you've nearly succeeded. Now that you're almost well, you old sphinx, I command you to smile for us."

When I weakly protested that it would be impossible to smile at a face like his, he retorted, "Well I presume I shouldn't make the task too hard. Then," he commanded with a nod in the direction of my nurse, "grin a bit at her, you old woman hater!"

In spite of myself I was conscious of a slight sensation resembling a smile when I glanced at Miss White, but it was immediately arrested by Cuttom, saying, "It's time to take the stitches out. Miss White, bring the dressing tray."

"Oh, won't that hurt terribly?" I protested. "I feel too weak for anything like that today, Cuttom. Can't you, won't you please put it off 'til to-morrow?" I pleaded.

"Listen to the mongrel," said the Colonel. "Heard a man say lately that Doctor Richard Smith is the greatest surgeon in the country; had done more operating than any other two men. Said Smith was a fine surgeon but handled his

patients too roughly. Wish his admiring booster could hear him to-day! Now," he went on addressing me, "I suppose I ought to wait till tomorrow. I suppose it would be proper to let these stitches rot out, and run the risk of having you die of sepsis! But I'm not going to do it. I have lately been reading your famous work on 'The Practice of Surgery,' especially where it states that patients after severe operative procedures are usually so weak mentally during early recovery that the surgeons must not yield to their importunities in attention to the dressings, but must boldly attend the wound according to its needs."

I realized that I was still in the hands of the enemy and could only plead, feebly, that care be exercised. I gasped, clinched the bed clothing and set my teeth, awaiting the worst. "How many stitches are there? Please don't hurt me, doctor," I managed to say.

Cuttom had been whistling as he stood over me dressed in surgeon's gown and rubber gloves. Apparently addressing Miss White he said, "Now aint our friend Smith the limit; wonder if he ever heard any whining questions from the thousands of patients from whom he has removed stitches? Wonder if he ever had serious thought about hurting them? It does depend some on whose ox

is gored, don't it? A dose of one's own medicine may not taste good, but I have thought sometimes that it does good, especially when taken by the same doctor who writes the prescription."

Cuttom resumed his whistling and turned toward the window.

"Well, let's have it over with," I said, I fear a little peevishly. "Let's have the stitches out."

"Your imbecility adds a new chapter to the already large book on the idiocy of physicians, especially when patients," Cuttom replied glaring at me. "Lordy, man," he continued, "the stitches are all out. I find the wound is healed, the temperature normal,—everything normal except your crazy, addled old noodle. Can't you believe in us for a minute? Miss White tells me that from the first you have persistently, and I think almost wilfully, jumped from one bad spell of dumps into a worse one. I'm ashamed of you; I'm ashamed of my profession in which you pose as one of its most highly trained and shining lights. You need a lesson from my little patient, my greatest example of perpetual sunshine, tiny Nick. I shall send him to you. Miss White, go to the children's ward and bring our young Personification of Happiness, if you can find him!"

Cuttom turned to the window, was looking out upon the traffic below, and was whistling some air which I fancied was expressive of great sadness. A feeling of pity for him and his kind rose within me. Here is a man, I thought, a type of many, who has devoted his whole life unselfishly for the good of others. Has he been appreciated at his worth? Have I appreciated him as I should?

When ill and confined to bed; when very ill and long confined from dangerous operation or disease; especially when one has been near, or actually into the valley of the shadow, there often comes a reminiscent mood. Such mood sometimes is conducive to a study of problems related to the philosophy of life. One is apt at such times, when entirely relieved from the thought and burdens incident to the actual tasks of business, or profession, to review these problems most critically.

Therefore as Doctor Cuttom stood before the open window whistling, the vision of his struggles in life to attain the proud eminence he now holds in the surgical world passed before me. I had known him as a sturdy, handsome youth, all through the grade and high school. He was then a leader in all things, but especially a leader in everything that required high mentality, great labor and clear vision. Later, in the University,

and the Medical College, these same traits, a good mind and a will to work, distinguished him from others.

I now realized more clearly than ever before his resolute steadfastness of purpose toward a single end, to acquire a degree of professional skill limited only by his mental power to grasp and his will to do.

My own limited knowledge of the labor and hardship encountered in one's rise to eminence in other professions or in business does not, of course, enable me to make just comparisons of the respective difficulties met with in each. However, in reviewing the life of Cuttom at this moment, and recalling the long period he has unceasingly and uninterruptedly labored, the constancy of purpose throughout, and the sacrifices he has made to all else in life, I feel justified in rating him great among men. He always held, most justly in my estimation, a high place in the esteem of all. Neither during his rise, nor since, did he ever vary his course from a clean, unquestioned pathway. Others, I recalled, who were less qualified or scarcely at all qualified, had sometimes risen rapidly because of social or financial influence, but had as quickly fallen to their proper level because lacking in fundamental knowledge

and constancy of purpose. Doctor Cuttom seemed to me now as he stood before the window much

> "Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful
> form,
> Out from the vale and midway meets
> the storm."

He turned from the window, evidently attracted by a quick rhythmic pounding on the hallway floor outside, which I recognized as the approach of someone on crutches. It must be Miss White returning with the boy "Nick" whom Cuttom had described as the personification of happiness. The joyous laughter of a child rippled through my partly open door. Although I had always loved children I did not wish to see any just now, and scowled at the thought of one coming.

"Miss White was looking down fondly at the boy's partially upturned, happy face—" (Page 35)

CHAPTER IV

I Meet Crippled Little Nick

AS the door was pushed widely open there was before me a picture I shall never forget. Miss White stood in the center of the entrance, her immaculate gown forming a background for a boy of perhaps ten. To me, whose whole life has been spent among the afflicted, it was evident at a glance that the lad had endured great suffering and hardship during his short life. A crutch on either side supported his frail body. Miss White, a hand laid tenderly on each shoulder, was looking fondly at the boy's partially upturned, happy face, which was almost as white as the nurse's gown against which it lay. The child was saying, "Oh, me an' Aunt Johnnie had the mostest fun this morning! She wuz all fixed up kinda crazy like, wearin' that lid o' her'n that makes the kids all laugh till they're sore an' can't laugh no more like they want to when she talks through her nose, and tells all them bear stories, and jumps little Bill an' me."

He gesticulated with both arms as he went on, evidently describing some favorite visitor to the

children's ward. He ceased his marvelous activity with an abruptness that was almot startling when his glance fell upon me. The incident was a bit disconcerting. What caused the shadow to cross Nick's face at that moment? Whatever the cause the little fellow began to wriggle and struggle to disengage himself from Miss White, who under pretense of holding him, struggled and pretended to fall against the door. Then the child in his cat-like forward movement upset everything in the pathway of his flight. Impeded by crutches as he was, he fairly flew toward the window and to Doctor Cuttom, who now stood facing him in an assumed, belligerent attitude.

"Want to fight me again to-day do you, you young imp of satan?" the Colonel said in pretense of anger as he doubled his fists and prepared for Nick's onslaught. "You licked me yesterday, you little scamp, but you're not going to do it to-day! You didn't play fair. Hold on there, Nick, play fair, I say! It isn't according to the rules to catch a man by the leg like a mad dog, and cling like that. A fellow has no chance——"

Tiny Nick had dropped his crutches on reaching his "deadly" opponent, had darted between the Colonel's legs, grasped one and was holding on in much the manner of hugging a pole when

climbing it. The weazened little creature continued to cling to the leg like a drowning pirate to a spar, meanwhile laughing, gesticulating and pounding the imprisoned member.

"You can't lick me! You can lick little Bill, but he's ist a baby. You can't lick me, you old bluffer," he said as he again swung round Cuttom's leg. "You can't——"

"Oh I can't, can't I?" the Colonel replied savagely. "You just watch me, you slippery little eel. I've learned some new tricks o' fighting since you licked me yesterday. Look out there, you young savage," he roared, as he began to raise his leg off the floor with Nick still clinging to it and pounding viciously. "Look out, you young would-be-murderer, my new trick of fighting may take you unawares and kill you outright," he went on as he lifted the leg still higher and higher, his great strength and Nick's wasted body enabling him to do this as easily as if the child were only a fly. "Look out I say! The fight has only begun, you ruffian," the Colonel shouted, as he now began shaking the imprisoned leg in mid-air in a desperate effort to dislodge his wily opponent.

Finally amid shouts of laughter, intermingled with the proper amount of abuse that should pass between those engaged in a "death struggle," and

after many furious kicks and twists and turns of the extended limb, the wary Nick seemed about to lose his grip and tumble to the floor. Seeing this Doctor Cuttom lowered the boy, and Miss White caught him in her arms as, by a last desperate effort he was shaken loose. He slipped from Miss White as easily as quicksilver through a closed hand, and then with a series of leaps and bounds finally landed on the window sill. From this high perch he shook his fists and roared defiance at the apparently disconsolate Cuttom.

"You can't git me, you can't! Have some new tricks o' fightin' have you? Well you'd better try 'em out on Baby Billy, hadn't you?" and he again laughed and gesticulated in his happy childish way, evidently enjoying the last great victory over his best friend, the fighting doctor, who could at will have crushed the poor shadow of a child in his hand.

"Oh! I'll get you yet, you young Muldoon," Doctor Cuttom replied, making an ugly demonstration before Nick, as he turned to my bed.

"I thought you sent for Nick to talk to me personally, and to exert some sort of witchery on me," I said, I fear a bit peevishly. "Nick gave me only a passing, clouded glance. Nice game you've played on me. Can you explain it?"

"Can't you understand?" Cuttom answered more seriously than he had at any time spoken during my illness. "Can't you realize that the strangely happy child, this suffering, weazened little Nick, has no affinity for anything in life akin to sordidness? His quick mind must have realized at that one glance at you that there is nothing in common between you and him. Hence he fled from you as one would from a pestilence, fled to the arms of Miss White who understands him perfectly, and to me because,—well, perhaps because I am willing to enter with him into some of his childish tricks."

"Oh, of course," he went on, as I started to remonstrate with him on the propriety of a dignified man, an eminent surgeon like himself, entering into the little melée he had just had with Nick; "of course it hardly seems in keeping with the stern, exacting professional life you and I lead. But that it does not probably accounts more than any other reason for my doing it. I must confess that these romps afford me great pleasure. Such mingling with children relaxes and fits me for serious tasks, just as other men are made fit by golf, tennis, boxing or other manly sports. By entering into the life of children I have learned something of their psychology. I wish I knew

child psychology better, for it is my conviction that what little success and honor I have attained in our profession is in no small degree due to the fact that I early learned that to properly manage a child we surgeons must intimately know child life. To know child life first-hand and thus be able to use the knowledge to advantage, we must associate with children as much as possible. To do so I find wise, enjoyable and profitable."

When the doctor ceased speaking and left the room I felt that I had learned another secret necessary to the making of a great man.

CHAPTER V

I Am Cured of My Despondency

FOR several days I continued to think of the incidents connected with the visit of little Nick. I had not slept well the past night, and during the wakeful hours found myself reviewing over and over again the phenomenal character of that hopelessly diseased and deformed child. I recalled that as he sat in the window after his make-believe battle with Doctor Cuttom I had observed that one of Nick's legs was twice larger than the other and that the greatest enlargement was at the knee. The child's thin, bloodless face and his wasted body were strongly suggestive of tuberculosis. The disease of the knee probably was what is commonly known as "white swelling." The little fellow's care-free, happy disposition, and his abnormal activity were astonishing in one so clearly an invalid. I had never seen eyes more searching, or that danced with a joy more real. His little legs and arms were in constant motion, expressive of the state of joyous childhood. His tiny face was almost angelic with happiness, ex-

cept for the moment when he looked at me, and immediately fled to Colonel Cuttom. I must confess to considerable worry over that apparently trivial incident. Was the doctor correct in interpreting Nick's total avoidance of me on the ground that I repelled his happy nature? In this connection I recalled what Aunt Mandy had argued to the effect that I was practically well but would not admit the fact, and that my constant worry and fretful disposition greatly delayed my recovery. Had this ignorant old negress made a correct estimate of my inmost nature, and was I included in the class to which she referred when she remarked, "Ah sees sick folk what's sick, an' ah sees folks what aint sick, but only thinks dey is; an' de folks what thinks dey is when dey aint, is the worstest sick folks dey is."

Had I been so cowardly, and so inconsiderate of others during my illness that the fact was constantly evident to all, even to little Nick and old Aunt Mandy? If a child so young as Nick, and an ignoramus like Aunt Mandy had noted these weaknesses in me, my demeanor must have been very unreasonable. Knowing that I had been very ill, I wondered if all the cells that gave me bodily form, and furnished me with whatever degree of mentality I possessed, might not have been so dis-

arranged temporarily as to change my very nature. I was beginning to feel greatly ashamed of my conduct. I was also unable to keep back the thought that I had often classed my patients as weaklings, hysterics and cowards, because of their similar behavior during convalescence, when such behavior should, no doubt, have been reckoned a necessary part of the disease, and an essential phenomenon of recovery. Was I learning a necessary lesson in the psychology of the afflicted by suffering with them in their afflictions? I was ready to admit the belief, and was longing to see the happy face of Nick again when interrupted by a confusion of voices, tramping of feet and thuds upon the pavement in the hallway outside my partly open door.

" 'At's mine I thay! I thay it's mine! Aunt Johnnie brung me that cauth she said I'm goodern anybody," a childish voice was saying.

"No it aint, neither," a piping, thin, irritated voice replied. "Aunt Johnnie never gaved a mud-faced pee-wee like you nothin'. Aunt Johnnie wouldn't give a mean, ornery scrub like you nothin'. Hand it over there, right now, 'fore I lick the face offen you, you mangy little mutt."

There followed a slight pause and then noises like that of falling sticks upon the tiles. There

was a thud as of a soft body falling violently upon the floor. Then in a confusion of grunts and groans, of angry voices and abusive language of street urchins, my door flew violently open and there rolled into the room upon the floor before me two children grappling each other in violent contest. Over and over they rolled, kicking, pounding, biting, threatening in a manner wholly characteristic of the broils of childhood.

The incident came with such suddenness, and continued in such a whirlwind, that I had difficulty in distinguishing one boy from the other. Finally there escaped from the hand of one or the other boy an enormous red apple, which disappeared under my bed. Quick as thought their grips were disengaged, and each made haste to follow and seize the prize. I then recognized Nick, who, unable to rise to his feet without crutches darted under the bed weazel-like, secured the apple, escaped to the opposite side, and then leaped into the window before his antagonist seemed to realize what was taking place.

"Oh Aunt Johnnie gave it to you because you're so good did she?" Nick said derisively from his window-seat. "Yes, I'll tell Aunt Johnnie 'bout how good you are, Billy," he continued, munching the apple he had recovered. "I'll tell her all about

it after I've licked some o' that ugly mug offen your face, though, I will! Purty good apple, this is, Billy! Wisht you could have a bite. But Aunt Johnnie wouldn't like it mebby, if I'd give you a hog bite!—Aw, shucks, though, what's the use," he said, some of the old happiness returning. "I don't want to be all mean to you, Billy. Come over'n git some of the apple," he grinned. "It's mor'n half left, an' you'n me's pals, you know!"

Attracted by the boy in the window I had not looked at his antagonist until now. Billy was standing on the floor, head down, a clenched fist bored into each eye, until he heard Nick mention a division of the apple, and utter words intended as an invitation to the prompt renewal of friendship. He then removed his fists from his eyes, raised his head and looked sullenly toward the window where Nick was holding the apple before him as a most tempting peace offering.

As Billy stood with tear stained face and gazed wistfully at the terms of peace which Nick dangled before him, I observed that he, too, was an object of great pity. Nature had been kind in providing a perfect body, but for some unaccountable reason there had been failure to join properly together the two parts of the upper jaw so that there remained a frightful cleft in the lip and

palate, together with much deformity about the nose. This not only gave the poor little fellow a most unsightly appearance, but it hindered the development of proper voice, and gave it a marked nasal, "harelip" tone.

Billy took a few steps in the direction of the window and then halted, apparently doubtful of Nick's friendly intentions. He stood for a while as if in debate over the proper thing to do. Finally he said in that interrupted, peculiar nasal voice characteristic of those so afflicted, "That aint your apple, now Nick, you know it aint. An' you know I kin lick you any ol' day, cauth I've done it. You got that apple now cauth it flewed outen my hand when we was scrappin' an' cauth you kin run fastern a rat on your hanth an' kneeth, under the bed where the apple ith," he continued, thoughtfully, believing that he was amply justifying his defeat, and the loss of his trophy. "You an' me ith pals though, aint we, Nick," he asked, holding up his hands to receive the mutilated fruit. "You an' me hath more fun nen ennybody," he was trying to say, though unintelligibly because his mouth was already too full of apple to talk.

"Nick an' me—" he began, but was halted by a tremendous commotion in the window. Nick

had in some unaccountable way reached the middle window sash to which he clung with both hands in support of his frail body and useless leg.

"Oh! oh! oh!" he exclaimed excitedly as he pounded the sash with one hand which he had released for the purpose of punctuating his new joy. "Oh! oh!! they's a scrap down there in the street," he said, pointing wildly and gesticulating in that direction with his free hand. "Bully fer you, old Skinny! Bully, Bully! That's the stuff! Skinny's got him down. Now crack it to his fat old lobster face! Um, oh, oh, that aint fair! Ol' Fatty's bit Skinny on the nose and is pullin' his hair," he went on exhibiting great anger. "Wisht I could just git holt uv that mean ol' Fatty onct! Betchu I'd mash that mush face uv his'n—" he was going on wildly and shaking his fist in the direction of the sidewalk when disturbed by the entrance of Doctor Cuttom.

"What kind of a circus are you people pulling off here to-day," the Colonel said in his loud, almost boisterous, but kindly manner. "Where'd you get these two untrained, wild and savage little beasts?" he asked, addressing me, and evidently referring to my uninvited visitors, Nick and Billy. "What new stunt is Nick up to now, I'd like to know? Looks like he's courtin' some dare-devil

high dive into dry earth, judging by his position in that window," he exclaimed apprehensively as he saw Nick at that instant grab the middle sash again with both hands and swing himself partly in and out through the half open window.

"Come down from there, you little rascal," he commanded, as he caught the child around the waist and pulled him loose from his precarious attachment to the window. "You'd have been dead before now," he observed half to himself as he dropped Nick gently on the floor, "if it were not for the almost certain operation of that law which watches over and protects fools and children."

"How's my other young imp?" he went on, turning to little Billy, catching him under his arms and tossing him up and down to the great delight of both. "What's happened to your face, you little scamp?" he asked, observing the numerous scratches and blue spots which decorated Billy's features. "Been fighting again, I dare say, you savage," and, with a glance toward Nick, ended with, "I hope you gave Nick a good trouncing, for he needs it badly and I failed to thrash him yesterday."

"How's Aunt Johnnie to-day?" he asked, addressing Billy, and avoiding further mention of the fight.

"Oh, she'th the very besteth aunty ever wuth," replied Billy, the mention of Aunt Johnnie causing smiles to wrinkle his face and show the scratches and blue spots more plainly. "Aunt Johnnie gaved me the bigguth, reddeth ap——"

"She didn't neither," Nick broke in testily. "What's the kid givin' you?" Nick asked, doubling up his fists and edging like a fighting bantam toward his late antagonist.

"Guess she'th my own auntie, aint she," Billy piped, making fistic demonstrations at Nick. "An' I kin lick you any day," he yelled as he flew demon-like, toward the little cripple.

"Here, tut, tut, now! All this scrappin' wont do among friends. Right here in a sick room, too! Don't you know that the great Doctor Smith, Doctor Richard Smith, says he is very ill yet?" with a look in my direction. "And then, my angelic little friends have fought quite enough for one day, it seems to me."

The Colonel gently separated the boys, and, with a hand at the collar of each, led them across the room and seated them on the floor a few feet apart. Almost before the doctor's back was

turned the children had their heads together in most friendly attitude. Nick drew a broken bladed knife from his pocket, and Billy mysteriously produced a bag of marbles. In an incredibly short time the two pals were laughing uproariously as each dickered in trading his one sole commodity for that of the other.

After a thorough examination Doctor Cuttom pronounced my condition good, but my progress unsatisfactory. "You ought to have been up and around before this, Dick," he said. "You've held yourself back quite a bit by that infernal, contrary disposition of yours to look on the wrong side of your cloud. You've not shown any indication yet that you could see a silver lining if one were dangling before your eyes. Every one around here is commenting unpleasantly about it. Even old Aunt Mandy said to me this morning, 'Why doan yo' all give that grouchety ol' Doct' Smith a dost uv somethin' that'll meck 'im smile onct. Done bin in his room ev'ry mawnin' a cleanin' an' a scrubbin' an' a polishin' an' ah nevah yit seen nothin' what look lak' a smile a comin' even a mile or moh off. Doct' Smith suttenly sho' do need a dost of some sort of smile medicine!"

"Oh, yes, you can of course argue," he continued, anticipating that I would make some com-

ment on the propriety of listening to the advice of old Mandy on a grave question in medicine. "Of course we can smile at the lowly wisdom of such a creature in matters like these, but I am really coming to believe that sometimes people like her have a closer insight into affairs of great magnitude than we credit them with. Aunt Mandy lives constantly among the sick, and, after the nature of her race takes desperately to heart their troubles, little and great, thus making them her own. Her conclusions, therefore, concerning our patients are often correct. At any rate I am confident she knows more about your present trouble than you know yourself. We are going—"

He started to say something further, but was disturbed by a loud crash against my door, the nature of which I could not interpret. Nick and Billy, however, undoubtedly recognized the meaning of the bump, for both raced in the direction of the sound, Billy upright on his feet, and Nick crawling as he must without his crutches. Both reached the door at once, Billy tiptoeing and pulling at the knob while Nick assisted in opening it by traction further down.

Immediately the passage permitted, the cause of the commotion, a wheel chair, rolled into the room, propelled, it seemed, by unseen forces. In

the chair, upon a bed of immaculate white, half buried among properly arranged pillows, lay a tiny little girl, herself clothed in snowy linen. The child's eyes twinkled with a strange delight as she saw Nick, Billy and Doctor Cuttom, and a winsome, though extremely sad smile passed over her colorless face.

"Oh it's Peggy, our Peggy!" cried both boys together in a paroxysm of delight. "How did you find us, Peggy?" they asked as Billy danced round the chair, the scratches on his face now more evident than before, while Nick clung to the conveyance with one hand, laughed, and made happy gesticulations with the other.

"Well, how's my little angel to-day?" exclaimed Doctor Cuttom in a most exquisitely sweet and tender voice, addressing the little invalid in the wheel chair. "And have you learned any more songs for me? By the way, Nick, can you say that 'speech' now that Miss Short was teaching you the other day,—the one about 'Dick and the Clock,' you know. And you, Billy, didn't I hear you 'spieling' in the ward that Riley story about 'Yungens' that this same beautiful lady had so much trouble getting you to remember? Sure I did! Miss Short has since told me that you could recite that 'piece' as cunningly as a crocodile.

"The child's eyes twinkled with a strange delight—and a winsome, though extremely sad smile, passed over her colorless face—" (Page 52)

Why," the doctor continued with boyish enthusiasm, "we have enough talent right here under our very noses for one of the greatest vaudeville shows ever put on. Surely we have! There's Nick, the famous child reader! Billy the world renowned baby recitationist, and Peggy, the prodigy infant Patti. This is enough to make an 'own and only greatest show on earth,' " he continued excitedly, repeating one of Barnum's famous advertisements.

"We'll have Aunt Johnnie come in and join us. Doctor Smith has missed seeing any regular vaudeville shows for several weeks, so we'll stage one especially for him. Just common old everyday music 'hath charms to soothe the savage ear,' so we'll see what effect Peggy's heavenly voice will have on those old lugs of our dear friend, the great and grouchy Doctor Dick. Why sure," he said enthusiastically, "that's the stuff! We'll stage our big show and dedicate the whole caboodle, bag and baggage to the disconsolate invalid, the noted surgeon, Dick Smith!"

At this moment Aunt Mandy entered the room accompanied by the strangest looking person I have ever seen. At first sight of her Nick and Billy ceased their adoration at the shrine of Peggy

and flew into the arms of the strangely appearing visitor.

"I seen her first," Nick said, as he struggled to secure a favored place in her outstretched arms.

"No you didn't neither! I seen her ist fore the door—ist ath the door wuth opened," Billy stoutly asserted as he doubled his fists and scowled at Nick in a determined effort to maintain his position and receive the first hug from the welcoming arms of Aunt Johnnie.

"Oh we can compromise this quarrel without the show of so much temper," Aunt Johnnie said as she took both boys into her arms at once, kissed each tenderly, and then hugged them both together over and over again.

When she had finished her demonstration of motherly affection for the boys little Billy looked appealingly into her face and said, "Now didn't you give me the big red apple, Aunt Johnnie?"

"Naw you didn't give it to Billy, didja, Auntie? It was mine, wasn't it?" Nick asked in a surly belligerent voice, his little hands already clutching at Billy.

"Now really," Aunt Johnnie replied, "I'm surprised at my little boys fighting over that apple. And see how poor, darling little Billy's face is scratched! Aren't you dreadfully ashamed, Nick,

to claw and mutilate your little friend like that?"

"Billy said he's a gonna pound my face in, he did," Nick answered sheepishly, looking as though he were ready to cry.

"Well it's all over now, and you're going to be good pals again, aren't you?" Aunt Johnnie suggested as she brought the two youngsters together in a final great hug.

"The big apple you fought over didn't belong to either of you," she explained. "It was intended for Peggy, but since I understand it had fallen to the floor it was then anybody's property. You shall each have a bigger apple to-morrow," she assured them, and she punctuated the joyous announcement by another kiss. When released from Aunt Johnnie's arms Billy seized one of her hands, while Nick, supported by a crutch on one side, linked his free arm with Aunt Johnnie's, and together the happy trio approached little Peggy's chair, surrounded it ring-around-rosie fashion, and began to sing and act that little play as best they could, to Peggy's great delight.

"Peers yo' all is habben a moughty good time dis mawnin', jis a-singin' an' a-dancin' an' a-laughin'," chuckled Aunt Mandy. "Jes wus a-tellin' Mist' Khyarter yisttedy hit peered ter me dat when lots uv sick folks is all done been fetched

to-gether inter one place, dat when some uv 'em begin a-whinin' an' a-moanin' an' a-hollerin' lak dey sometimes does, it's ketchener en measles. An' by-um-by, presumptly, mos' everybody what you wouldn't think would ketch it, is got it worst. Mist' Khyarter he done make de obsumvashum dat nobody jes caint get well long as dey's all de time starin' inter de blackness. Den he make de further observashums bout de young lady what sing fer him, an' how de thrubbin' uv de banjo done got clean inter de place inside uv 'im which start him laffin'. An' right den, he say, he done begin ter gittin better, twell now he is shore nuff hisse'f again! Dat's sho' enough a fac'. Dey is sick folks what needs ter have a bit uv ring-round de rosie playin' a heap moh'n dey needs de doctah dope-stuff."

"Listen to Mandy," Doctor Cuttom exclaimed. "There's wisdom for you! However, like the rest of our knowing ones in medicine she doesn't practice half she preaches. If she'd keep busy with her shinin' and polishin', and take less 'doctor's dope' herself she'd—, but what's the use," he added aside.

Then addressing everybody he announced in a commanding voice, "It's time for the show to begin. Are you ready, Miss White? Where's

our first performer, the famous 'reader'?" he asked in astonishment, noting that Nick had suddenly disappeared. Dropping on his knees and looking into the only place of concealment in the room, the doctor discovered the strange boy under the bed, his eyes shining with the wild light of a new excitement.

"You can't git me," Nick said banteringly, as he saw the doctor peering at him. "You can't git me!"

"Oh, I can't, can't I?" replied the doctor in that soothing tone he always used with children on proper occasion. "We'll see to all that, we will! Come out from under now, you young evader of the draft, won't you," he continued more seriously, as he caught Nick by his well leg and dragged the laughing child into the open.

"Now then, ladies and gentlemen," the Colonel announced, "you shall have the privilege of listening to one of the prodigy entertainers of the age! This wonderful child, who will render the first number on the program, has never failed to bring laughter and tears,—but his specialty is laughter, —to every one, even those most unemotional. I am proud of the privilege of introducing to you Master Nick."

While the Doctor was speaking Miss White had been busy in preparation for the coming event. She had lifted Nick most tenderly from the floor and had assisted him to a position in the room where I could best see and hear. She next arranged his ruffled clothing and smoothed his tousled hair as best she could with her bare hands. Then she patted his head, stooped and kissed him and, I believe whispered words of love and confidence into his ear. Whatever she did produced a marvelous transformation in the crippled child,—a change never possible in my opinion except through the medium of love and sympathy such as I had just witnessed on the part of Miss White. When all was ready the nurse stood with Nick immediately in front of her, supported in a manly position. Aunt Johnnie was half kneeling on the floor, and holding one of his hands in both her own. Nick began the "reading" slowly at first, and for some reason riveted his eyes upon me as he spoke in his thin, clear voice, emphasizing the important points so that the meaning was unmistakable:

"When Dicky was sick
In the night, and the clock,
As he listened said 'Tick-
Atty—tick-atty—tock'!

He said that it said,
Every time it said 'Tick'
It said 'Sick' instead,
And he heard it say 'Dick'!"

Nick paused to cough. Miss White patted his cheeks reassuringly, and Aunt Johnnie looked admiringly into his face and squeezed his hands. I squirmed a bit in my bed and felt slightly irritated. Why all this performance in my sick room? Was this some prank of Cuttom's? Was it a premeditated plan to show me the folly of my worry? When the clock said "Tick," Dick thought it said "Sick," was running through my head. Was that applicable to me? Had I really been courting sordid states of mind, and listening to false voices instead of opening my eyes to the joys about me?

Nick continued with greater emphasis and assurance.

"And when it said 'Tick-
Atty—tick-atty tock,'
He said it said 'Sick-
Atty—sick-atty—sock'!
And he tried to see then,
But the light was too dim,
Yet he heard it again
And 'twas talking to him!"

Again there was a pause. I saw amusement in the faces of all, especially of Aunt Mandy, who was beating time with her hands and shaking her fat sides in unison with Nick's measured, half musical, 'Tick-atty, tick-atty—tock'. I doubled my pillow, placed it under my back and sat half reclining against it. Without realizing it fully, perhaps, I felt that unseen forces were lifting the cloud of despondency that had enveloped me. I felt the "Tick-at-ty—tick-aty—tock" coursing through my senses! Was I smiling with the rest? Nick's quick perception evidently recognized that joy was awakening in me, and he continued more lively than before. Old Mandy took a position in the room where she could more freely give expression to her movements.

"And then it said, 'Sick-
Atty—sick-atty—sick,
You poor Doctor Dick-
Atty—Dick-atty—Dick!' "

Then seeing my smile broadening, and stimulated by the ludicrous doings of Mandy, Nick, almost in a shouting voice, exclaimed, "Hey, fellers, look at him!" and, pointing a finger at me, continued, now accompanying his words and the rhythm produced by Mandy patting the floor, by

the motion of his hand in imitation of a choir leader.

"There he goes, laugh-
Atty—laugh-atty—laugh—"

Nick stopped for a moment, his voice drowned by the laughter indulged in by all. When the merriment subsided he seemed to recall with great enthusiasm some exciting event of days gone by when he was a "newsie," for he placed one little hand to his mouth, leaned forward and yelled in a loud, excited tone: "Hooray there, Mister! Huxtry, huxtry! all about—all about—"

He hesitated for words, not having been properly coached for the somewhat unexpected termination of his "reading." Cuttom, however, always equal to any occasion, especially an emergency like that in which Nick found himself, took up the cry and bellowed in sincere delight, "Huxtry! huxtry! all about an old Sphinx-face laughing!"

Every one rushed toward Nick, and no great artist ever received more genuine, heartfelt congratulations than he. Certainly no one ever received more caresses following a notable rendition.

When the happy friends finally released him, I asked Miss White to bring Nick to my bed. I was

now sitting boldly upright, and was smiling with the rest. "You're a wonder, Nick," I said, taking both his hands as Miss White lifted him to my side. "Your kind of medicine for my kind of sickness proved better than anything Cuttom has given," I continued, giving the child a hearty squeeze.

"Aint ah done tole yo' all moh'n onct dey aint no ust dopin' folks what aint sick but only think dey is," Mandy broke in. "Ah done say heaps uv times dey is some sort uv doin's dat'll cure mos' ebery sickmuss, ef yo' only jes kin sort out what kind uv doin's is de right one. De purty young lady shorely did cure Mist' Khyarter when she come a-singin' an' a thrubbin' on the banjo fo' him. An' now Doct' Smith done git well when Mist' Nick mek 'im laugh. Nick a-laughin', an' de young lady a-singin' an' a thrubbin' on de banjo sho' am better'n all yo' ol' doctah dope."

"It seems like a perfect cure for our friend Smith but we shouldn't boast of our results too soon," Doctor Cuttom observed. "I can recall some very serious relapses among my patients when I failed properly to follow them up. Hence we must not pronounce our friend Dick entirely well until we have given him more of Nick's and Mandy's kind of treatment. And,"

the Colonel continued, turning to Mandy who was now holding Nick's hands and smiling and bobbing over him, "I would advise you to see to it that Mr. Carter keeps up his singing and banjo lessons with Miss Short until he is entirely out of danger."

Consulting his watch in a professional manner and addressing Miss White, he added, "It is time for our patient to have another dose. We are now ready for the second number on the program. Trot out the next merrymaker."

While everyone else had been congratulating Nick, Aunt Johnnie had busied herself in putting little Billy in order. When all was ready I observed the ruddy-faced, red-headed little fellow perched upon a chair, with drooping head, and the fingers of one hand thrust deeply into his mouth. Aunt Johnnie held the other in hers and was speaking words of confidence to him.

I had previously observed that Billy was a perfect specimen of boy, with the one exception of the hare lip and cleft palate. As Aunt Johnnie lifted his head, his appearance was more strikingly hideous than on the day of his fight with Nick. Two of his front teeth were now missing, evidently one result of the contest with Nick for the apple. This added defect caused the already

broad cleft in the lip to appear wider than it really was. The scratches and bruises on his face, which now was swollen, appeared at their worst. Our "greatest recitationist" did not, I thought, present the most prepossessing appearance.

Taking no account of his ugliness Aunt Johnnie had given him a final kiss and hug, with perhaps other assurances that he was among friends, and bade him begin. He reluctantly removed his fingers from his mouth, partially rotated his body rapidly a few times, and then, almost with the suddenness of an explosion, said, in his characteristic lisping voice,

"Me an' Bert an' Minnie-Bell
Knowth a joke, an'—
Knowth a joke———"

There was a pause and dead silence. Aunt Johnnie lifted his head again, whispered something to him, and otherwise petted him, after which he began once more, apparently with added confidence.

"Me an' Bert an' Minnie-Bell
Knowth a joke an' we wont tell.
No we don't—cauthe we don't know,
Why we got to laughin' tho;
But we got to laughin' tho,
We ist kep' a-laughin'."

Then followed another interruption during which the child's fingers went again to his mouth, and his eyes sought the floor. He continued in a trembling voice,

> "Wind wuth blowin',—
> Wind wuth—blowin'—wind,—"

and then another pause in which it seemed Billy would break down completely.

"All right, Billy," Cuttom said, encouragingly. "That's just fine! Now go right on."

"Fine, Billy, fine; go on, Billy," every one insisted.

"Lauzy, Lordy, Billy," Aunt Mandy exclaimed. "Lauzy sakes, honey! I'se done heerd yo' say dat piece moh'n a hunderd times an' always so sweet an' soothin' lak, yo' po' little angel! Now stan' up an' say it for de folks jes de way yo' done fo' yo' pore ol' Aunty dis mawnin'!"

Thus encouraged Billy raised his head and looked sullenly over his audience. Just in front of him, I observed Nick, who was making every known grimace, and shaking his fists at Billy most menacingly. Billy saw this and his whole attitude at once changed. He straightened himself proudly and assumed a determined air, all intended, no doubt, to impress his young enemy, Nick, that he

could "say a piece," and that later he would "maul his skinny ol' face in." In his strange, weird voice Billy now struck out boldly.

> "Wind wuth blowin' in the tree—
> An' wuth only ist uth three
> Playin' there; an' ever' one
> Ketched each other, like we done,
> Squintin' up there at the sun
> Like we wuth a-laughin'."

Every one present seemed to realize that he was, for the moment, a child again, under the tree with the other children, and with them was "squintin' up there at the sun, like he was a-laughin'," so that all found themselves laughing and giggling. And, leading all was Aunt Mandy who was shaking her fat sides with laughter about something which she could no more define than we. No doubt Billy gave the proper explanation when he continued:

> "Nothin' funny anyway,
> But I laughed, an' tho did they—
> An' we all three laughed, an' nen
> Squint our eyth an' laugh again.
> Nen we didn't ist p'ten',
> We wuth shore 'nough laughin', then."

All now, were without doubt "shore 'nough laughin'." When I looked at Mandy and saw her

bobbing her old black head, shaking her fat body and patting her foot upon the floor, her shiny face convulsed, I had to laugh. When Miss White looked at Aunt Johnnie, or when Aunt Johnnie looked at Miss White, the laugh of the one or the other or of both in concert seemed irrepressible. When everyone looked at me a storm of laughter broke out. I do not know why, but probably I myself was laughing so ridiculously.

Throughout this entire performance little Peggy lay in her chair, her deformed and wasted body half buried among the snowy pillows, a semi-angelic smile upon her thin, pale lips. When Nick and Billy each respectively had ended his "reading" she clapped her skinny little hands in genuine delight. While Doctor Cuttom was making a masterful introduction of the child, in which he used all the adjectives descriptive of the near divine, Aunt Johnnie was busy at the several necessary adjustments of Peggy's invalid chair, and a rearrangement of the pillows, to the end that she finally rested in a semi-reclining, easy position. The laughter, occasioned by Nick and Billy's performances had subsided and was succeeded by a smile on each expectant face. The smile was not one of mirth, but rather one that might be occasioned only by the contemplation of something

sacred or holy. Mandy stood near Peggy, her hands clasped, and her face upturned a bit, much in the attitude of one before some object of worship. Aunt Johnnie and Miss White stood one on either side of the wheel chair, and gazed down upon the child with looks akin to adoration. With a small voice but clear as a skylark, Peggy sang,

"There are smiles that make you happy,
There are smiles that make you blue—
There are smiles that steal away the
tear drop
As the sunshine steals away the dew."

I have heard Melba sing, and was charmed. But with all her great ability as an artist, her marvelous singing never impressed me as did the sweet, simple voice of this little child. While there is nothing especially sad in the words, all who heard must have felt that there was an inexplicable something about the affair that seemed sad. Perhaps it was the thought of the deformed child herself, perhaps it was the quality or manner of voice, or possibly it may have been both, but whatever it was the effect on the listeners was that of sadness. Aunt Johnnie stood with drooping head, evidently to conceal her tears. Miss White had her handkerchief to her eyes, while Mandy, Doctor Cuttom and myself wept openly.

When Peggy continued Mr. Carter accompanied her on his banjo, and every one joined in singing the chorus, which greatly served to brighten the tear stained faces that were visible when the child sang alone. When she had finished, Peggy lay back upon her pillow exhausted but radiant. There was general applause, and then such a rush for the chair upon which the singer lay that she was at once wholly surrounded by her admiring friends. From the vicinity of the white pillows in the chair came sounds suggestive of numerous caresses as each in turn paid homage to Doctor Cuttom's "Infant Prodigy."

During this spontaneous ovation to Peggy, Nick and Billy ran to the children's ward where each snatched an armful of flowers from a supply which had generously been left that morning for Aunt Johnnie's distribution, and now appeared before the smiling cripple to whom they presented the offering with childish courtesies and congratulations.

Since every one seemed to know the story of Mr. Carter's cure, and the means by which it was effected, lively interest was manifested in him. Almost instinctively, therefore, all turned to him and pleaded for a number on the banjo. After

much persuasion, he yielded and proved himself a master of the instrument.

Doctor Cuttom then remarked that too much of even the best thing may do harm, which was interpreted to mean adjournment. The Colonel and Nick were last to go. Before leaving, the Doctor hoisted little Nick to his shoulders and gave him some object which the lad hung high on the wall exactly in front of me. It was a large placard suspended where I must at all times see it, and bore the legend, "Keep Smiling."

As Cuttom passed through the door still carrying Nick on his shoulders, I felt certain I heard the doctor say, "That 'huxtry' surprise you sprang at the close of your 'piece' was one of the big hits of the performance. How did you happen to think of it just at that time, you little rogue?" Nick made no answer, but, childlike only grinned and pounded the Colonel's head with his clenched fists.

CHAPTER VI

I Learn Some History of My Entertainers

ONE week following the Colonel's "own and only greatest show on earth" I was permitted to sit in an easy chair by the window. My melancholia had entirely passed away, and I was able to sympathize, I must admit, more than ever before, with the many whims and vagaries of the sick. I realized fully how unreasonable I had been throughout my illness, and resolved that never again should I unduly censure my convalescent patients for behavior that I now felt is sometimes, at least, an essential part of the disease. I also recognized as never before that the humble and lowly, like Aunt Mandy, for example, are often possessed of a type of wisdom that should not be despised.

I found myself spending hours in contemplation of the characteristics of children like Nick and Peggy. My professional life had been largely among children of this class, and I had prided myself in the belief that I knew their kind well, that

I loved them greatly and was in turn loved by them. I am certain now, however, that my previous understanding of these unmothered, deformed little creatures was most superficial. Their several visits to my room, and especially their 'readings' caused me endless wonderment concerning the ability of such children to expend almost the last atom of their scanty, flagging vitality in the dispersion of happiness so genuine that all must share who come into contact with them.

The part in life played by women like "Aunt Johnnie" provided a theme for almost endless speculation. I was therefore interested to learn something of her past and of her present relation to the hospital. It was clearly apparent that this strange woman wielded some magic power over children, and notably over crippled and deformed children. Knowing Miss White's intimate and reliable information concerning almost every feature of life in the hospital, I asked her to tell me what she knew of Aunt Johnnie, Peggy, Nick and Billy.

"Aunt Johnnie is one of those sweet souls," my nurse began, "who has been here for many years. You no doubt have noted that her chief love and labor centers about the children's ward, but her

interest and duty she believes, is almost as great in the wards of the adult poor. She almost never visits any other part of the institution, and indeed it is rumored that she not only is indifferent to patients of wealth, but has an actual aversion to those of great wealth."

"The name 'Aunt Johnnie' certainly is unusual," I said. "Surely this is not her real name. I fancy it must be some pet name that has been given her, and is significant of the esteem and affection in which she is held by the 'guest' patients."

"I doubt if anyone now in the hospital really knows Aunt Johnnie's actual name," Miss White explained. "I understand that the present title was given her by patients in the ward soon after her arrival here. The rumor is, that she was deformed from birth, but either as a result of ignorance on the part of those having her care, or because of religious prejudice against any attempt to correct 'the work of the Lord,' she was allowed to drift into young womanhood without surgical attention. Finally, when at an age when she could reason for herself, she applied to the greatest surgeon of the time for aid only to learn that she had passed the period when surgical help was possible."

I was wondering, as Miss White was reciting this interesting bit of Aunt Johnnie's early history if the incident of the congenital deformity, and the failure to be relieved of it because of ignorant bigotry, might not be responsible for her subsequent devotion to charity, and especially to that branch pertaining to crippled and deformed children, when Miss White resumed her story.

"Aunt Johnnie came to this hospital primarily on account of some serious ear trouble; mastoiditis, I believe it was. Because of her appearance, due to her deformity, she was never able to secure remunerative employment, hence was poor and came as a 'guest.' When first admitted she was abhorrent to other patients, who, according to gossip among the nurses, often turned away from her or covered their faces when in her presence. Both before and following her operation she suffered greatly, yet it is remembered that Aunt Johnnie never uttered a cry or made complaint during either her illness or convalescence. Even while yet confined to bed and while yet suffering she showed such sincere sympathy, and spoke in such kindly, assuring terms to those around her of less fortitude and patience, that the aversion toward her soon passed and was succeeded by a feeling of admiration and pity."

"But you haven't given an explanation for calling her Aunt Johnnie. Surely so strange a name would not have been given without some reason."

"Well," continued Miss White, pausing a moment to reflect, "I recall that I once heard the story to the effect that, following or during the severe surgical illness I have mentioned, it became necessary to cut her hair short, after which her fellow patients jokingly spoke of her as 'Johnnie,' I suppose because it gave her the appearance of a boy. Later, when her kindly nature, and eager willingness to sacrifice her whole being for the good of others became apparent the word 'Aunt' was added, presumably for the reason that then everyone could claim an equal and common kinship to her."

"Yes," I said, "I think it probable that your explanation is the correct one. At any rate it is beautiful to think of it in that light. Many of the unfortunates for whom she cares are motherless, and no doubt instinctively speak the words 'Aunt Johnnie' with the same respect or reverence that more fortunate children utter the word 'mother.' I have never seen greater love of mother for child than that of this woman for the little ones in her care. I realize that Peggy soon must leave us, and I shudder at the thought the effect of her

going will have on Aunt Johnnie. Her tender care of the child, and the great love manifested, have been both beautiful and pathetic."

"What do you know of the lives of the children?" I asked.

"From social service records and from rumor I learn that Nick's grandfather and two aunts died of tuberculosis. His mother died of the same disease when Nick was but a few months old. His father was a drunken profligate. The child became a newsboy when old enough and thus partially supported himself and father. They lived in a miserable hovel. The father was finally killed in a drunken brawl after which Nick was taken to an orphanage. Frail because of inheritance, ill because of improper nourishment, unsanitary housing and exposure during his father's life, he soon developed a tuberculous joint and was sent to this hospital many months ago as a guest of the ward, and a patient of Doctor Cuttom."

"Peggy's history," Miss White continued, "is made up of fragments gathered here and there. Her mother was foreign, a great singer in Grand Opera it was alleged. She was traveling with a company in America until a few months before Peggy's birth, at which latter time the mother died. Nothing is known of the father. The child

was cared for by a member of the company for a time, but finally misfortune overtook the organization and it disbanded, leaving little Peggy motherless, friendless and helpless. Someone charitably inclined, believing that Doctor Cuttom could cure the child, sent her to this hospital where she has for many months received the Colonel's kindly attention.

"Billy's parents are physically perfect. They are strong minded, well educated, respectable people. Misfortune of every kind has followed them, Billy's defective lip and palate being only one. Consequently they were too poor to provide proper surgical care for the child. A representative of the social service, Miss Short, visited them, won their friendship and assured them that the noted surgeon, Doctor Cuttom, would be able to restore the defect."

CHAPTER VII

I Listen to Talk of Operations

MY nurse, Miss White, had pushed my chair to the sun parlor, and, this being her afternoon off, I insisted that she go early and take a much needed rest. Accordingly, after locating me near a window somewhat screened from the main part of the "parlor" by a row of palms she left me to what I hoped might be a quiet afternoon to myself.

I had lighted a cigar, my first in several weeks, and was searching among the magazines before me for an article which I wished to read, when I observed another chair swing round the sheltering row of palms and stop almost opposite my window.

"Hello there, brother," said a voice before I could turn from my task with the magazines. "Fine day, old top!" the voice went right on. "Deuced nice thing, these sun parlors! Gives a feller a chance to get out of them confounded, miserable two-by-four chicken coops they call rooms here. Been penned up in one of them

nearly ten weeks this time, but had a better one than other times just the same, though. Guess a feller learns a little more about hospitals every time he's operated just like he learns about other things if he keeps his eyes open. Blamed management tried to shy me into one of them pigeon holes on the 'third rear' once, and I fell for it for two days, not knowin' the ropes like I do now. Don't know if you ever seen one of them 'beauty parlors' or not, or mebby hung up in one yourself, but if you did you've got something to talk about the rest of your life, all right!" the man rattled on aimlessly but good naturedly.

I tried to interrupt with some remark of introduction but this seemed impossible until he reached the destination he had determined upon.

"Yes, them cubby holes up there was cut out of an old ward or somethin' just about big enough for one decent room as it was. But what would you think they done? Well, Sir, you may scuttle my brig if they didn't go and make twelve little air containers outin that one old room and called each one a 'budwar,' or somethin' sounded like that. Want to tell you that the two days I was in one of them little boxes was 'bout the worst event in my calendar, so far. Had to shake hands with

my friends through the door, and open the window to get elbow room when I et."

"Have you been operated yet?" he asked abruptly changing the subject, setting his head to one side and cocking a crossed eye in my direction. Before I could answer he went on almost without a pause.

"Shucks, shouldn't a-asked you that. You *have* been, I can see that. Can tell every time by the cut of a man's jib and the hang of his gills whether he's been operated, but can't be so dern certain about the rest. Guess you wouldn't mind tellin' a feller which one, would you?" he queried, cocking the crooked eye toward me once more.

Anticipating that he was leading up to a discussion of operations in general, and probably of his own in particular I recalled Doctor Cuttom's injunction against my taking part in such conversations or even listening to them while under his surgical care. I also remembered the Colonel's penalty, "death by poisoning or drowning."

Glancing beyond the palms I observed little groups of convalescents in the room, and the word "operation" reached me from their direction with the regularity of a clock tick. I therefore began to reason that if I should spend any part of the remaining time of my convalescence here in the

sun parlor that it would be entirely impossible not to listen to discussions of operations. Indeed it seemed likely that one would have opportunity to listen to almost nothing else. Furthermore I reasoned that when I made the promise to Cuttom, I was seriously ill, not wholly responsible for what I did or promised, and therefore, should not be bound by such promise now. Then too, I argued to myself with some pride as I felt my normal vigor returning, "I soon shall be able to protect myself against the execution of the penalty, should I really disobey!" Although I had always agreed with the Colonel that much talking of operations was harmful and should be suppressed, I now was filled with the desire to join the rest, cut loose and have my say—"For," I argued, "have I not been seriously ill? Has not my case been most remarkable? Have I not suffered more than others?" Surely, I felt, I must relate all my experiences. They certainly are too wonderful to conceal, for strange as have been the many stories I have heard from convalescents, those I am withholding are more miraculous still. Is it not my actual duty to speak of operations? Yes, it is my clear duty to speak. But I am honor bound to Cuttom not to do so. I must, therefore, make a great sacrifice. Consequently I

resolved upon one thing, that I should be only a good listener, and should not if it were humanly possible to do so in such a place, take any part in the discussion of operations. I certainly should not discuss my own operation, difficult though I knew it to be not to do so.

Fully resolved upon this course I faced my loquacious companion and said, "You asked me 'which one' did you not? What which one do you mean? I don't understand your way of putting it."

He laughed as though what I had said were a good joke. "Which one?" he repeated, looking at me rather pityingly. "You must be a purty new one at the operatin' game, brother! Kind of a novice at the job I should say! Why, of course I meant which operation?"

"Oh," I replied, appearing to understand. "You mean gall bladder, stomach, tonsils, —?"

"Naw, nothing like that," he interrupted, staring at me as though he wished to discover, if possible, just what rare corner of the great back woods I could have come from. "Naw," he repeated. "What's the number? How many times have you been operated before? Is this one number seventeen or twenty-one for you? That's what I'm drivin' at and havin' a hard time to find out."

"Oh," I laughed, "that is what you want to

know is it? Well, this is my first, and I hope it will—"

"Only the first" he interrupted, clearly showing contempt. "Did I understand you to say only the first? Well then, you are something of a goslin' around here; just a real novice, you are! Bet you'll find yourself lonesome good and proper bein' about the only first in the whole caboodle. But you got to be first sometime I reckon," he added a bit consolingly. "Been a long time since I was a freshie, though, in the class o' them that's only been operated once," he continued as he swelled with pride at the thought of his operation record, and looked at me with much condescension.

"Reckon you had a purty bad operation, though? Appendix likely, or more probably liver or a piece o' 'lights'? Couldn't used to whack much on a feller's 'lights' an' git by with it, but now, by jimminy, it 'pears these saw-bones guys tackles either the gears o' your transmission or the gears o' your differential, and seems to make no special difference in the after runnin' if they take out one or more damaged cogs and leave 'em out. Mebby you wouldn't mind tellin' me some of the main p'ints of what they done to you, and how

your old machine is workin' now without all its vitals?" he suggested somewhat confidentially.

"No, I don't care to discuss my personal case," I said. "It is not at all probable that what was done to me would interest anybody. I—"

"Well, come to think about it you're mor'n likely right, brother," he agreed, though apparently much puzzled that anyone should be unwilling to speak about operations, and especially about operations on himself. "Yes, you're dead right in not openin' up on your case," he continued reflectively, "fer it aint at all probable that your one operation could have many startlin' p'ints o' interest to me or others who have had real for sure prunin', and an experience worth listenin' to. I know now I talked too dern much about my first three or four operations that didn't have no thrillers in any of 'em. Best I kin remember it was my seventh before anything turned up that was really wuth wastin' much breath in tellin' about. Onc't or twic't, though, I've heerd of a case around here that as early as the third, sometimes ther'd be something bob up in a operation that would be more entertaining to talk about than others that run up to number six, or even as high as number ten. Heerd o' one operation that was a real poser when it was only just the first, and

thought mebby yours might a been one of them lucky kind," he added reflectively. "Thought it wouldn't do no harm to ask, anyway."

"Here comes a feller with a interestin' record o' trimmin'," he said, nodding his head in the direction of one end of the palms.

Glancing in the direction of the nod I saw a man in middle life approaching. It was evident that he had recently passed through great suffering. Several scars disfigured his forehead, and a surgical dressing still covered the region of one ear.

"Here's what I call a game old sport," the cock-eyed man continued, as he pushed a great leather chair into position with one foot and motioned the new arrival to a seat.

"Mr. Jones, this is Smith, one o' our baby classmen," he said by way of introduction. "Jones of 107, Smith 109," repeating the introduction according to the location of our rooms in the hospital. "Neighbors livin' close together like that ought to be on easy speakin' terms, I allow," he chuckled, as he cocked the crooked eye first at one, then at the other of us.

"Kind o' thinkin' Jones won't find you a very interestin' neighbor though," he continued, addressing me. "He's not any too likely to buck up

close to a tenderfoot first caser in the operatin' game you know, 'cause Jones, here, is somethin' of a old timer like myself when it comes to operations. Is it six or nine times you've been sawed-on?" he asked, looking at Jones this time. "Nine is my rickallection, but I'll be jiggered if I can keep 'em all exactly straight. Got his coco busted in a auto mixup 'bout four years ago, accordin' to the best I kin remember," he ran on, evidently referring to Jones. "That's about right aint it, Jones? You see," again addressing me, "Jones don't like to say much about his operations just now, bein' too sick yet to do 'em justice, but his'n has been some case, I want you to know! Mor'n twenty big pieces of bone has been snitched from the clabber in his noodle, not mentionen the little ones. Seen a whole bottle full o' these pieces down in the lab' onc't. Can't nobody accuse you bein' a complete bonehead no more, eh, Jonesy! Kindo mussed up and addled your brain a bit, though, till Doc' Cuttom pulled out them last splinters at operation number nine! Some operation that was, believe me!" he exclaimed in great admiration, as he faced Jones with a friendly grin.

"Jimminy!" he said somewhat excitedly, looking beyond the palms in the direction of a group of convalescent women that appeared to be shift-

ing position. "Jimminy!" he repeated with emphasis, "they're fixin' to invade us! Talk about the first inhabitants o' hospitals and you'll see some of 'em headed this way right now if you'll lamp in that direction. All graduates and post-graduates in every branch o' operations, in that bunch. Can't none of us talk much on that subject when any o' them professionals is around. It's all right to talk o' operations a-plenty long as you stick to facts and the exact truth, but some o' these——"

Evidently he was intending a dissertation on the veracity of women, and of this particular lot of women, when interrupted by their much giggling as they approached.

"I was just telling the girls here of a remarkable operation that was performed this morning," one of the group was saying as they took their places about us, "when one of them suggested we should not appear so selfish as to discuss important surgical news all by ourselves. So you'll pardon us for joining you. My Aunt Mary used to say that while men may not be greater gossips than women they certainly like to hear gossip better than women. But what I was saying to the girls was that there was a truly wonderful operation performed this morning. Certainly very

wonderful to me, and I presume I have been around a hospital quite long enough to judge. I first began coming here when Aunt Mary had her first operation. Next Cousin Johnnie was here many weeks after falling into the basement and breaking three ribs and a leg. Then almost before Cousin Johnnie was able to be up and around I was rushed in for my first———"

"Oh, go on and tell us about the wonderful operation that was performed this morning," the other women insisted. "We don't care anything about your Aunt Mary's, Cousin Johnnie's and your own experience. That's ancient history. If we can't hear something modern, up to the minute, we'd better adjourn and await the news of the next real surgical stunt, something worth discussing, some thriller like the Jones case," one of the party went on to say, but stopped suddenly as I noted that the woman at her elbow held a finger to her lip and glanced in the direction of "107."

"Oh, yes," the first speaker continued, "I did get a bit off the subject. Let me see. I started to tell about the wonderful operation this morning. Boy four years old had swallowed a tack, an open safety pin and a toy locomotive. The doctor——"

"I don't exactly regard that as anything unusual at the present time. My doctor showed me

a regular hardware and implement store that he had recovered from the gullets, windpipes and lungs of enterprising youngsters. He said that he could have started a small bank if he had been permitted to keep all the nickels, dimes and quarters he had removed from these forbidden parts. 'But,' he added, 'the patients or their friends always insisted they must keep as souvenirs, money or other valuables that he recovered by operation.' I didn't see it myself, but I heard that he once removed a watermelon seed from a boy's lung that had been swallowed so long that it had sprouted, had vine and leaves, and was—"

Everyone looked incredulous at this and one suggested that there should be a rule adopted in the hospital which would prevent the narration of any operative experience except it be well proven.

"Well, of course," continued the narrator of the hardware and melon seed story, evidently a bit peeved, "while I did not actually see the sprouting seed and leafy vine, a reliable witness told the story to a friend of mine who vouched for its truth. It should be unnecessary, it seems to me, to question the accuracy of my statement, when it is thus thoroughly fortified by facts."

"This interesting contribution on the subject of hardware and vines reminds me," said Eliza-

beth, "of an operation which I think we must concede was both remarkable and rare. It adds variety, and illustrates the wide range operative surgery may cover. Instead of being able to start a hardware or a toy store, or perhaps a melon ranch as our friend's doctor might have done, my doctor could have established a menagerie.

"There can, of course, be no question as to the facts in the case, for my own nurse, whose honor is unquestioned, learned the facts through a personal friend, a young doctor who said he was first assistant at the operation. The patient, a child, had suffered greatly from stomach trouble. Medicine failed to give relief. The diagnosis being uncertain an exploratory operation was undertaken. When the stomach was opened, much to the amazement, almost consternation, of everybody, there squirmed and wriggled out from it a number of little snakes, 54 in all!"

The narrator became quite earnest as she proceeded, demonstrating by serpentine gesticulations of her hand the rapid movement and wriggling of the snakes when once set free by the surgeon. Absolute attention was given as the story progressed. However, as the live snakes were uncovered by the speaker just as, step by step, they had been by the surgeon, and as they

were dramatically described as wriggling away only to be captured, the listeners broke into a concert of discordant voices, interrupting the story.

"You don't expect us to believe that, do you?" one said indignantly.

"What had your informant been drinking when she saw the snakes thus unceremoniously wriggling out and sneaking away?" laughed another derisively.

I had on several occasions observed a young lady among the convalescents who was distinguished from the others by her classical face, plain dress and somewhat mannish speech. On inquiry it was stated that her name was Deborah, that two years previously she had graduated in arts from a great university, after which she engaged in the study of law. Her legal studies were interrupted some weeks ago by a sudden ailment which necessitated operation. Deborah's whole thought, it was said, centered upon things legal and judicial. Her own conduct, as well as those about her must, in so far as she could control it, be on strict lines of approved legal form. The alleged facts concerning the operations which Ethel and Elizabeth had just reported gave the enthusiastic young law student an opportunity to express her legal views.

"What Ethel and others have just said is not sufficiently backed up and substantiated," Deborah objected. "All of it has been hearsay. It would, therefore, be inadmissable in any court, and would——"

Deborah's argument was arrested by old Aunt Mandy, who evidently was agitated, even angered, by the young lawyer's words, which the old negress must have believed were a threat to stop all speaking of operations.

I had for some time observed Mandy beyond the row of palms, apparently engaged in her task of "shinin' an' polishin'." Attracted, no doubt by the much speaking of operations which went on in our little circle she had found it convenient to work nearer and nearer the screen. Recalling the effect on her of my attempt several days ago to prevent her from speaking of operations, I was not surprised at her attitude now. She dropped her polishing cloth in her excitement, rested her arms on her fat sides and looked defiance at Deborah as she spoke.

"Dey aint nobody what kin stop de watah a-runnin' down de hill, de birds a-flyin', or de fishes swimmin'. Lakwise dey aint no coht, an' dey aint no lawyer dat wears skhyrts kin stop talkin'

erbout op'rations, kase hit's nachl, an' de way hit's got ter be."

"Ah specks what de lady Elizabeth done said erbout de snakes is de shore nuff trufe fer hit sounds lak de tale de doctahs wuz a-tellin' erbout in 27 dis mownin'. Dey wuz sayin' er boy was playin' in de kitchim whar dey wuz a eel what de daddy has done ketched an' put in a pan er watah. Presumptly, by-um-by, when de chile seen de eel, 'e set up a whinin' an' a-hollerin' lak he done gone plum crazy. An' when all de folks hear de screamin' and hollern, dey come runnin' ter whar de chile is at, an' when dey doan see no eel, an' kaint find no eel in de kitchim nowhar, an' de po' lil chile keep on cryin' and hollern louder all de time, dey all jis reason de boy is done swaller de eel. So dey all git excited moh and moh, an' scream an' holler wif de boy twell somebody done sen' fo' de doctah. When de doctah come he done ask erbout ef dey wuz a shore nuff eel in de kitchum when de boy is a-playin' dar, an' ef dey kin be no possuble m'stake erbout hits bein' a-hidin' in de room sommers now, and not in de chile's stummick a-tall. An' dey all say kaint be no m'stake an' dat de po' child wouldn't carry on lak he do lessnen he swaller de eel; an' den dey all des beg de doctah won't he please hurry an' git de eel outen de boy's

stummick so he stop de hollerin' an' actin' lak he crazy.

"De doctah he des up an' tole de folks dat ef dey aint no mistake, an' deys a sure nough eel in de stummick, de boy is shorely gwine ter die lessnen he kin git de eel out very presumptly. An' he say to de folks, more-sumover, dat he kaint save de po' chile's life a-tall lessnen dey fetches 'im inter de hospital instemptly."

Old Mandy's enthusiasm grew enormously as she apparently reached a climax. I had never seen her so wrought up on any question before, but then I had never seen her during a general discussion of the subject of operations. I now realize that speaking of operations appeals to her extremely emotional nature most powerfully.

I have been much puzzled to determine whether her tale was told to outdo Elizabeth's rather incredible snake story, or whether she believed it and thought it worthy of record among the strange surgical doings that daily transpire in any great hospital. I am, however, inclined to the latter belief, for as Mandy resumed her narrative she seemed to address herself more particularly to Elizabeth and to speak most sympathetically.

"So dey fetch de lil' boy inter de hospital all in a hurry lak, an' op'rate 'im. An' jes as soon as

dey open de stummick, an' look clean inter de inside uv it, dey doan seen no eel dar a-tall. So de Doctah say he guess de folks is shore mistakem 'bout de boy swallern de eel, an' dat 'e mus' a-ben jes bad skeered, an' dats what mek 'im cry an' holler an' take on crazy lak he do. An' de doctah nex' low he better jes purceede an' sew de stummick up whar he is done cut de big hole. Kase what he already done aint gwine ter hurt de boy none an' he mos' certumly am gwine ter git well and quit hollern and carryin' on, so de doctah say. An' he an' tother doctah dey jes laugh and laugh an' look at me an' laugh some more an' say, 'Mandy, doan yo' all think dat hit's a great blessin' to op'rate de lil' boy an' save 'is life when dey aint no eel dar a-tall?' An' I laugh back at de doctahs an' say, 'Ah specs yo' done save 'is life mo' certumly dan you' saves some er de lives yo' is op'ratin' on an' braggin' erbout so much.'

"An' den dey all laugh once moh an' look moughty sheepish lak dey doan feel good no moh, an'—"

"But, Mandy," interrupted one of the ladies, "you must tell us what became of the eel."

"Yes," said another, "we heard where the snakes came from, how many there were, and something of their subsequent history. Please

clear up the mysterious disappearance of that elusive eel."

"Sure, we want to know about the finish of the eel," everybody said at once. "Tell us, Mandy."

"Doan know nothin' moh erbout de ole eel," she replied. "Only ah specs dat when de folks searched de kitchum, under de chairs an' tables an' khyarpets an' couldn't fine de eel, dat dey at last, finumly looked under de ole rug in de corner, way back under de kitchum table, an' dere wuz Mist' eel a-settin', all quiled up an' happy, lak he done enjoy hisse'f trememdustry!"

CHAPTER VIII

I Listen to Estimates of Doctor Cuttom and Others

NEXT day as I again sat in the sun-parlor listening to the never-ending talk about operations, I was startled by the abrupt question, uttered almost in my ear, "Who operated you?" Turning I saw my loquacious, much-operated friend of yesterday at my elbow, his crossed eye cocked at me after his strange, quizzical manner. I was at first disposed to regard his question as insolent, and to ignore it accordingly, but realizing the innocence of his intent, I answered with some feeling of pride, remembering my long and friendly relations with the Colonel, "That great surgeon, Doctor Cuttom. The Colonel and I———"

"Yes," he interrupted, "I've heerd o' Cuttom. Feller at Prairie Center where I live said Cuttom is a great surgeon but would charge more fer removin' a wart than the price o' a winnin' race hoss. A guy here jist yesterday was braggin' what a big feller this Cuttom is but allowed he'd a been

a heap sight bigger and better than he is if he'd a stuck closer to his carvin' and stay'd away from that kid roost down at the cripple's ward on No. 3. He cal-lated that old Doc' Cuttom was spendin' mor'n half his time down among them wuthless youngens, a-tossin' 'em on his knees, chasin' 'em round the room like puppies, or feedin' 'em knickknacks he's brought 'em. Seen him myself this morning down there with a flock o' them crippled birds, and a crazy-lookin' old woman they call Aunt Johnnie, all around him, laughin' and jokin' and wastin' valuable time. Doc was smilin' on a little hump-backed brat in a wheel chair, who was lyin' among white pillars and lookin' like she wouldn't live a week. A little spavin' legged imp named Nick was clingin' to one o' Cuttom's legs an' kickin' an' laughin'. Another urchin, 'Baby Billy,' think they called him, whose face is all split open like the lightin' might a tried to kiss him onc't, was pullin' the tails o' the doctor's white gown and hollern' and shaking his fists as if he wanted to fight with him. Don't see how the feller stands it to be around a little scarecrow like that Billy! Reckoned by the rules on which the good p'ints o' fine hosses is judged the whole kit and bilin o' this outfit, includin' the ugly old woman that was with 'em makin' a big fuss over 'em and

a-lovin' 'em like they was something precious, aint wuth thirty cents. Kindo looks like your 'great surgeon' could be usin' his prunin' knife on better timber than such unpromisin' shrubbery as them youngsters. Seems to me——"

I was ready to make answer in defense of the conduct of Doctor Cuttom, but before I could speak the young man with a banjo interrupted and pleaded the cause of Dr. Cuttom and the children more earnestly and well than I could have done.

"Neither Doctor Cuttom, the children of the 'guest' ward nor the women who care for these helpless little ones need any defense," Mr. Carter began. "It is rather you and I and others like us who need vindication of our conduct. The Colonel labors gratuitously to relieve the suffering of the youngsters, and the women devote themselves to providing for their comfort and pleasure. The result as you may see is contentment and happiness in the ward where otherwise unmitigated misery would forever sit. Meanwhile those who criticize do nothing.

"I must admit," he continued, "that until recently I had similar views concerning children like Nick, Peggy and Billy. I had perhaps scarcely known, indeed it was probable I was not interested in knowing, that there are such unfortunates in

the world. Had destiny not precipitately cast me into a hospital I possibly never should have been better informed, and should have forever entertained false views such as our friend just now has expressed concerning the deformed and helpless. Like him, no doubt, I had been too occupied with my own selfish affairs of business and pleasure to give even a passing thought to a deformed child, and certainly never wished to mar any pleasure in life by the association of things disagreeable. My confinement here has changed my views. At first I considered it a calamity which I almost resented. I now see that Nature enforced the kind of rest I would not have taken voluntarily, and that during this period I have been given opportunity for observation that has better enabled me to know and to understand children of the Nick and Peggy class. I can now appreciate as I never otherwise could have done the tender patience with which such children endure their suffering. Then, too," he went on, a bit embarrassed I thought, "there are associated with these children the most devoted, most self-sacrificing women in the world. The constant motherly love and care bestowed by Aunt Johnnie is a benediction greater than any I have ever known. Even old Mandy—"

"Of course, why, of course," Mr. Jones intruded seriously, "every one knows Aunt Johnnie is a saint, and old Mandy is a near saint. But don't omit due praise for the handsome young lady who sings and plays so beautifully to the children every day. I mean, you know, that faithful young lady-visitor from the social service, the one who taught Peggy to sing 'Smiles' like the little angel she nearly is," he continued to the evident embarrassment of Mr. Carter. "Aunt Mandy has been lavish in praise of Miss Short, and she no doubt justly attributes your speedy recovery to the magic voice and bewitching smile of this winsome creature."

"Well, I suppose, I must grant you whatever pleasure you may find in your estimate of Aunt Mandy's judgment in affairs of this kind," Mr. Carter resumed. "Miss Short is capable, and is doing, I believe, a noble work in social service. However, the point I wished to make was that there are women who unselfishly devote their lives to ameliorate the suffering of these children, and to provide for them such joys as they alone can understand. It is entirely probable that if they and the children for whom they care should be judged solely by a monetary standard, as suggested by our friend just now, all would be en-

tirely 'wuthless', as he stated. But I for one, since having been under the spell of their influence, can not now believe their lives are without value, or that these children will have lived in vain."

"I, too, have been greatly touched during my convalescence by the subtle power of these same influences," Mr. Jones said. "The softening effect produced by the unselfish devotion of these women is but a little if any less than that wrought by the children themselves. As an example of this influence on formed, hardened character, one may cite the case of Mr. Short, whom many of you know. He has always been regarded as wealthy, close-fisted and utterly devoid of all thought or feeling for those in distress. Short knew Aunt Johnnie as a child and was fully aware of the fact that her deformity could easily have been corrected, yet it is alleged that his only thought concerning her was that 'it would be a great blessing to the world if all such children could die in infancy.' Short's interest in the 'guest' ward was brought about through his favorite young niece, a volunteer worker in social service, whose noble efforts Mr. Carter has just mentioned. This young lady has been highly trained in music and sings and plays most charmingly. Her music, and her unremitting devotion to these children have

won them to her unconditionally. It was she who taught Peggy to sing, and Nick and Billy to recite 'pieces.' It was also she who staged the program for her uncle's first visit to the ward. On this occasion Peggy sang 'Smiles' sweeter than the angels, according to a statement made by the visitor afterward, and Nick recited James Whitcomb Riley's 'The Happy Little Cripple' with remarkable pathos. Billy acquitted himself favorably by 'reading' a fairy story.

"During these childish performances the other children clapped their hands and cheered. The visiting uncle sat apparently in reverent thought during Peggy's and Nick's part, but smiled and seemed delighted at Baby Billy's droll description of the doings of his fairy. Nick and Billy then engaged in one of their frequent scuffles, rolling over and over on the floor, and finally ending under the feet of Mr. Short, greatly to his amusement.

"Short became so much interested in the children that his visits to their ward finally became the regular thing. Each was made the occasion for a song, the speaking of a 'piece' or a friendly romp and scuffle on the part of Nick and Billy. Especially were such visits very happy occasions for the little cripples when the visitor came, as he

now usually did, with pockets full of playthings, and sweets such as they might have, which he distributed to all who, with happy, expectant upturned little faces, stretched their wasted arms toward him to receive the precious trophies."

"It must have been the occasion of one of Mr. Short's visits to the ward this morning," Ethel suggested. "I heard a perfect ecstasy of laughter and on looking in saw an old gentleman seated, with Nick clinging to one of his legs and pretending to pound, kick and even bite it, as its owner tossed him up and down. Baby Billy sat astride the big fellow's neck, holding him completely captive, as he clutched one of his ears in each hand, whereby he jerked the ponderous bald head first to one and then the other side, much to the merriment of all."

"The nurses say that lately the 'guest' ward has been almost lavishly supplied with flowers, and that there is rumor to the effect that a wonderful self-playing musical instrument is expected soon. Much mystery surrounds the affair, since the donor is entirely unknown," one of the ladies remarked.

"It couldn't be old man Short that's responsible for anything that costs real money," another asserted with emphasis. "I've known that old miser

all my life and if he ever spent a dollar on anyone but himself the remarkable circumstance never became public."

"Men like old Short haven't any right——" someone attempted to say, but was stopped by the precipitate entrance of Aunt Mandy, her face and manner indicating great alarm.

"Lordy, lordy, Doctah Smith," she exclaimed, all out of breath, "wished yo' all 'ud please come to de chillun's ward quick! Ah cain't find no doctah anywheres in dis here hospital an' dat po' chile Peggy done bin sick all day an' am a gittin' mo' an' mo' sicker all de time. Look ter me lak she shore am a gyine ter die lessnen somebody is a helpin' 'er moughty quick."

As Mandy hastily pushed my chair toward the elevator it was evident she was greatly agitated. Her hands trembled and tears blinded her sympathetic old eyes. When we passed through the door into the children's ward I observed Aunt Johnnie kneeling by Peggy's familiar chair, her body half covering the child and one arm around the wasted little form. The usual mere suggestion of color in the child's cheeks and lips was gone and the captivating smile she always wore had departed. Peggy's soul had already passed through the open gates!

CHAPTER IX

I Make an Estimate of Johnathan Short

THE next several days were spent as much as possible to myself. Try hard, as I did, to banish the thought of Peggy, I could not do so. For some reason the song the deformed child sang when first she visited my sick room clung to me, and was repeated in my fancy again and again. What was it in Peggy's untrained, though sweet and simple childish voice that so greatly stirred my emotions? At first I thought it might be a weakened state of mind, due to my recent illness, and that what I believed was unusual, weird and soul-inspiring was but a fancy. Then again it was attributed to sympathy, due to a realization of the child's long and patient suffering, and to my belief that her tiny spark of life soon would be extinguished. I sometimes felt that it must be wholly on account of that most winsome of all smiles which unconsciously rested on her lips that day, and greatly emphasized the sentiment of the song, for it was like a glint of radiance from another world that lighted her face and shone like a holy light in her eyes. My final

conclusion was that while all these views were partially correct, it was the remarkable child herself that impressed me most profoundly, as she did every one who came for any length of time into her presence. Those who knew, as did Aunt Johnnie, that Peggy had lain in the wheel-chair, her body encased in plaster and unable to rise since infancy, marveled that one so afflicted could retain the gentle manners and sweet disposition so characteristic of her life.

Her funeral was simple and in complete harmony with her tender nature. Flowers, emblems of her youthful purity were there in profusion, bearing silent messages of grief from loving friends. Children of the rich, then in the hospital, expressed the wish that they might contribute all floral offerings that came to them that day, in memory of a dear child of whom they had heard, but had not seen.

Those who saw wondered, but none probably will ever know except Aunt Johnnie and myself, that the most beautiful of all the tributes, a great wreath of white lilies with the name "Peggy" in the center, was provided by Johnathan Short. Neither will the public ever know that this same man Short paid all expenses incident to his little friend's burial.

I probably have known Johnathan Short, this man of mystery, better than anyone, yet he remains to me in many respects a complete enigma. It is difficult to understand why he thinks it necessary to be absolutely secretive concerning his numerous deeds of charity, especially when he must be fully aware that the public regards him as a stony-hearted, impossible personage. It was only through my professional labors among the poor that I learned Short's real character. And then, when he became aware of my knowledge of his gracious deeds, he would swear me to as much secrecy concerning them as one would expect had his acts been those of a criminal rather than of a good Samaritan. It was not surprising, therefore, that during the conversation among our convalescents recently several gossips in speaking of operations mentioned this good man and painted him the hardened sinner he is not.

Of course this entirely unjust reputation is his own fault, due to his hidden way of doing good, and to the fact that he never was known to subscribe a penny to any charitable cause. "Smith," he often said to me in discussing his big-hearted plans, "I believe I can dispense my small means more wisely when I personally look to it myself. Those who merely subscribe funds never know

the exact destination of their charities, nor the amount of good accomplished by their benefactions." He might have added that which I well knew was chief among his reasons, namely, the joy he received from personally seeking out those whom he wished to benefit, visiting their homes, living their lives with them, and thus finally gaining that confidence and friendship which is possible only by actual, sympathetic contact.

Strangely enough his benefactions had, in so far as I know, always been for widows, the aged, and the worthy "down and outs." Until his niece interested him in the children's "guest" ward of the hospital it is probable child life and child misery did not, for some reason, appeal to him. Peggy, Nick and Billy undoubtedly made the appeal to his charitable nature that greatly changed his former views.

During the many hours he spent with me since Peggy's death some opinions relative to the physical defects of children were expressed by him that were somewhat surprising, although I presume they should not have been, since I had heard them before, and as a surgeon had witnessed the unfortunate end results.

Little Billy's afflictions, perhaps strangely enough, formed a basis for one of these. Short,

it developed, had early in life been influenced by a belief, which had its origin in a narrow religious interpretation. Though never common, fortunately such views are disappearing. Short's belief in effect was that troubles like Billy's should not be corrected, because "That which is divinely wrought should not be changed by the hand of man." This had been the view of Aunt Johnnie's parents, which of course resulted in her unspeakable humiliation through life.

During his frequent visits to the ward Johnathan Short's quick power of observation supplemented by his interviews with Doctor Cuttom and me had finally convinced him that physical imperfections like Billy's are remediable, and that it is possible to lift such children, who are otherwise in perfect health and physical form, from a state of hopeless dependency, into a final position of equal opportunity for highest citizenship.

It now seemed to be Short's earnest desire to obtain all the information he could on child life and child deformity. He sometimes would sit for what seemed interminable periods, submerged in deep reflection. After one such period of silence he said, "Smith, it seems certain that too little is done for our child defectives. Of course I do not wish to deny that much time and money are be-

stowed on them, but I now see clearly that too often at the wrong time to be at all worth while. Many of the children now in the 'guest' ward here are examples of what seems to me criminal neglect. Any child with the wonderful voice and charming manners of Peggy should live to be a Melba or a Patti, to entertain and educate a sordid world. Nick's brilliant wit and happy disposition should lead him to eminence in politics, science or some learned profession. But what chance has he with his disease and deformity, even if permitted to live? You tell me both these children, and all such youngsters could be restored, but that they are not received into suitable environment at a period of life when restoration is most easily possible. I feel that something should be done to correct this unfortunate condition, and that men like yourself who, from long and intimate experience with this neglected phase of charity should make every effort to bring it before the public, which is, no doubt, as ignorant on this subject as I have been."

"You have," I said, "a correct view of the needs of the crippled and defective child in so far as your limited observation has permitted. All sensible people, professional or otherwise, come to the same conclusion if brought into intimate con-

tact with the children themselves, as has been your good fortune. But you must realize that only the smallest fraction of those about us ever actually see these little ones and therefore take no practical interest in their needs. As to efforts on the part of professional men to devote their services at a time most helpful to the child, I may assure you such is the first interest of every true surgeon. Men like Cuttom have given their lives unselfishly both to education of the public and to restoration of the child. Our greatest difficulty is inadequate hospital space. Did it ever occur to you that the 'guest' wards of nearly all hospitals, are at present not sufficient to accommodate a small percentage of children of the Billy, Nick and Peggy type? Surgeons like Cuttom willingly devote their time and money to these unfortunates, but there's a limit. On all proper occasions the Colonel lectures on the needs of the cause, but never mentions his own tremendous sacrifices in its interest. I hope you may find opportunity to hear this great authority on the need of better care for those who are handicapped in childhood, often as a result of the sins of the fathers, sometimes of accident, but almost never because of acts of the child itself."

CHAPTER X

I Am an Eavesdropper

AGAIN I sit in the sun-parlor behind my favorite row of palms. My progress back to perfect health impels me to thoughts of home and the resumption of professional life. Baby Billy sleeps quietly on his cot at my side, and I have for the past hour been completely absorbed in the contemplation of his rotund, ruddy face, his shapely forehead and his strong, well proportioned, square set jaw. Doctor Cuttom has recently wrought some magic charm on the child, for, as he lies sleeping before me his hideous mouth so much in evidence on the day of his first visit to my room, is now completely closed by unbroken pouting lips on which rests the rosy tint of perfect health. When he awakens and speaks, I realize that his voice also has been as greatly changed and improved as the lip, for he now speaks in the pure, clear liquid tones of normal childhood, and not, as before, in lisping head and nasal notes which so much emphasized the little fellow's deformity.

The Colonel also had but recently devoted his surgical skill to the restoration of Nick's tuberculous leg. The child's progress, because of his frail body and lack of resistance, has caused no small amount of worry to his friends. The same mysterious somebody who provided so bounteously for Peggy has now interested himself in furnishing every comfort for Nick during this crisis. Miss White has been employed to assist Aunt Johnnie, and one or the other has remained in constant attendance in the firm belief that they, with Cuttom, may restore his leg and enable him to walk again.

Peggy's death, Nick's imminent danger, and Billy's happy recovery had provided themes for rumination for a considerable time, and I was beginning to speculate once more on the strange case of Short, when diverted by the near approach of a bunch of convalescents, all engaged in the favorite pastime, that never ending topic, "speaking of operations." Since the young ladies were on the opposite side of the palms, and the foliage hid me completely from their view they seemed not aware of my presence; I was therefore an innocent thought perhaps willing listener.

Ethel was in the midst of an animated discussion with Elizabeth and Deborah, and I was sure

she said, "Oh, I know he'll be a difficult proposition. Everybody who pretends to know says he has a will not to be broken, and that when he sets his contrary old head—"

"His crazy, stubborn old head shouldn't make any difference in your ability to handle him, I should say, Ethel, judging by the ease with which you roped in that loquacious, cross-eyed, much-operated braggart from Prairie Center the other day," Elizabeth interrupted. "Of course the society could get along well enough without junk like him, but on the ground that it takes all kinds of people to make a correct world, it may take every type and character of man and woman to make our proposed society what it ought to be. One thing is certain, with this chap from Prairie Center a member, there should never be a dull moment in this new association, which I understand is to be christened, 'The Association for Speaking of Operations.'

"Now wont you please, Ethel, tell us you will join Deborah and myself in a committee to visit this man Smith, Doctor Smith I think he is, and not run the further risk of letting him get away from the hospital without joining. Everybody says he is rather an oddity, certainly in some ways. This Smith has been in the hospital several weeks,

has been operated, but, in so far as anybody can learn, he has never once entered into any conversation about his own, or other operations. Our new pledge, the man you mentioned from Prairie Center, says that he talked to Smith for a whole hour about operations and that the doctor wouldn't discuss the subject with him; wouldn't even mention the word 'operation' in any connection: he thinks, therefore, the doctor is a bit off mentally, just a plain nut, as he expressed it."

"That may all be true enough," Ethel answered, shaking her head and looking the part of the pretty conquerer she intended to be; "our committee will make him talk! We'll show him the importance and indeed, the necessity of belonging to our club. Certainly he's old enough and wise enough to understand the benefits to the world, and to convalescents especially, of membership in an association where each has had personal experience in the very thing for which the society will stand,—operations. He certainly can see, if the subject is properly presented, that nothing could be more helpful to people who themselves have been operated, than to come together and compare experiences, to relieve that pent up uncontrollable desire to talk at liberty of their operations, discuss the plans and kinds of opera-

tions, and possibly the merits and faults of the doctors that perform them. Oh,—"

"Well, that is all good argument, but you will do better to get it off on the impossible Smith, than to be wasting time telling us what you are going to do. What about the Committee? Are you with us or not, that's what we must know, and know now?"

"It's a pity you girls who are so glib, and so boastful about what you've accomplished for the good of the club can't inveigle one lone, helpless old man into coming in without my assistance; but if I've just got to be the whole membership committee, with you acting as decorations, I suppose I should know it. This society has simply got to move and if it can't be made to do so without me, why, of course I'm at your service. Now let's see! We should think a bit and formulate a plan. Smith is a hardened surgeon, and a lot of talk that would go with many people wouldn't do with him at all. He's a bachelor and possibly might fall for pretty faces and smiles; so Elizabeth, that's your job. You have a reputation of being a regular vamp, you know, and of course this will offer a splendid opportunity for practice.

"The arrangement of Deborah's hair combed straight back, showing a high forehead over a

classical face, and the large rimmed glasses she wears, fits her ideally for the part of learnedly presenting to him the scientific value such an association may have. So, Deborah, you will be expected to assume the pose of a great lawyer, senator or something like that, and, item by item go into the details of our aims, emphasizing always the humanitarian side as much as possible. And my part?—Well, I must think; what should be my part?"

"Oh, your part is plain enough," Deborah interjected. "Anyone knowing you as I do could have no doubt what you would best be able to do. Your place is that of flatterer before his majesty, the Doc'. You will best be able to show him how impossible it would be for the society, great and useful as its aims may be, to meet with any degree of success whatever unless Doctor Smith, the man of great eminence as a surgeon, he who has written the standard text books of his profession for a dozen years, etc., is an honored member! We will all trust you to make your part good and strong, Ethel, and if I am not seriously mistaken in what I know of you and Elizabeth, with you on one side of Smith, smiling and pouring on your never ending unctuous flattery, and Elizabeth on the other in the rôle of vamp, there will be little

necessity for me to get off any of my 'high brow stuff' on him. I suggest therefore the following dramatis personae:

" 'Contrary old doctor seated in hospital wheel chair, appearing indifferent, doubtful, or more probably, strongly opposed.

" 'Elizabeth standing at right and smiling most patronizingly at the victim in the chair, and assuming an attitude of the latest conventional vamp.

" 'Ethel at left, her head slightly inclined, partially turned toward the occupant of the chair, also smiling.

" 'Deborah, standing erect behind the chair, her hair combed back from her forehead and wearing enormous shell rimmed glasses. Her pose and general appearance representing a prize winner in higher mathematics.' "

"Deborah, you're a jewel," both Ethel and Elizabeth exclaimed. "The Doctor certainly should fall for this! We shall visit him shortly." And with this resolve they left the room, apparently fully satisfied with their plans.

CHAPTER XI

I Receive a Committee

THE next day, and the day following that, passed without the expected visit from the committee. It was probable, I reasoned, that the young ladies had found some new and pleasanter amusement to occupy the time during their convalescence, that their plans to capture me for their "society" were only a fancy due to their enforced idleness in the hospital, and that both I and the proposed organization had already been forgotten. I hoped some such reason might explain their failure to visit me, and that they would not now come at all. I gathered from what the girls had said that the convalescents were planning to organize a society whose purpose should be speaking of operations, and that it was this they wished me to join.

The thought of membership in such a society again filled me with a desire to talk of operations. I felt that my sacrifice because of my promise to Cuttom was unreasonably great. In the proposed society I should have a sympathetic audience

where I could at liberty relate the most unusual personal experience incident to my illness and operation. Should I not avail myself of this opportunity I should, as Aunt Mandy once observed, be cheated of a right "mos' nachl bohn." My operation had undoubtedly changed my view on the question of Speaking of Operations. But then, I made a solemn promise to Cuttom not to speak of operations, and I must keep the promise however keen my disappointment. I must, therefore, pretend that only harm could come from an association such as the committee would propose. That I could not sanction its formation, and certainly could not become a member if the sole purpose would be what I once thought, a foolish, never ending, speaking of operations. However, in pretending to oppose I should not wish to offend the committee, or those they represent, and must grant that all who so persistently indulged in speaking of operations evidently enjoyed it greatly. At least this seems to be the most plausible explanation.

In the midst of my experiments in formulating one and then another plan of finding the happiest way out should the girls really wait on me, I became conscious of movements and whispered conversation just on the other side of the hedge of

palms. Listening more intently I could hear what was said, and glancing through the thickly growing stems could make out that the committee was there already in line of formation for a final assault on me. I heard Ethel say, "Now don't be too sure, Deborah, that your sound, logical arguments will not be needed on him. Men like this are not always easily trapped by silly blarneys and vamps like Elizabeth and me. Already now! Remember your lines."

I braced myself for the attack and assumed as best I could under the circumstances, a most dignified and belligerent attitude. It was evident that the young ladies had been led to the belief that I should prove a difficult proposition. I therefore determined to carry out this thought, and awaited the expected onslaught. I had not long to wait, for next moment the committee as a whole, linked arm in arm, swung round the end of the row of palms. The glint and gleam of their red, yellow and pink gowns showed brilliant in the morning sun that steamed through the adjoining window. Like a flash they surrounded me and took their respective stations. Before I could fully realize what had happened Elizabeth stood at my right, smiling with all her clever witchery, and executing a series of strange and marvelous

movements of body possible only to the practiced few, but entirely characteristic and necessary attributes of the successful vamp. Ethel stood at my left, also smiling divinely, but was attempting none of Elizabeth's hypnotic trickery. It was evident from her pose and appearance that hers was to be a conquest of soft words. I could not see Deborah in her position at my back, but could visualize her there with great glasses which personified to the last touch, the modern goddess of wisdom. The girls before me were only amusing, but somehow I greatly feared the power of this strong minded law student behind me whom I could not see.

"Goodness, Doctor, what an elusive man you are," Ethel began, her smile deepening, her voice beautifully soft and patronizing. "Aunt Johnnie told us you were in the children's ward. Aunt Mandy directed us to Mr. Jones's room, and now we finally find you hidden away behind these palms all by yourself. All the members of our——all the convalescents have been saying such sweet things about you lately, and now that you're almost recovered from your terrible oper——, that you are fortunately nearly well, everybody is simply crazy about having you meet with us and relate some of your wonderful experiences. Aunt

Mandy has told us what a remarkable man you are and what marvelous feats you have accomplished in your profession. Mr. Carter says that as a surgeon you have no equal. Even the noted Cuttom admits——"

"These people are all——" I tried to say that I thought all her informants a mischievous bunch of flatterers, but evidently Ethel had committed her speech and would not be interrupted. She spoke right on, therefore, with ever changing smile and inflection, but losing none of the blarney she wished to heap upon me. "We are forming a new society, doctor. Indeed it will be wholly completed, when we get just one more member, the very choicest, nicest, jolly good fellow of them all,—you, Doctor Smith. You'll come with us, now won't you, doctor dear?" she went on, looking at me a bit pleadingly, as she and Elizabeth joined hands and laughingly danced a few steps about me like the happy, carefree children they really were. "Say yes, Doctor! tell us you'll join," Ethel continued, as the girls came back to their former positions at my side. "The society is waiting for our report that you are with us. It will never do to return to them without a pledge of your membership, and without *you yourself,*" she added. "They just can't get on without you!

Push our new member along, girls," she commanded, seizing one side of my chair and shoving me in the direction of the elevator.

"Oh, that would be unfair," I said, as I caught the rims of the wheels and stopped the procession. "You wouldn't wish me to join something—your society—without knowing any of the details, not even the name, would you?"

"Certainly not," Ethel agreed relaxing her hold on the chair. "We wish to be fair to you, but we must have you," she declared with pleasant emphasis. "Deborah, come out from behind that chair," she commanded, "and explain to our interested friend here the aim and purpose of our association!"

At the mention of Deborah my interest greatly increased. The young lawyer stepped promptly to a position in front of me with all the dignity and assurance of a learned counsellor appearing before the highest court. She stood erect, her chin slightly elevated, the enormous shell rimmed glasses covering much of her classical face and forehead. Before speaking she smoothed back the straight black hair from her brow, adjusted her glasses and without the slightest shadow of a smile, began:

"Your name is Smith, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Doctor Richard Smith, is it not?"

"Yes."

"You are a surgeon, I understand."

"I have been engaged in the practice——"

"For many years," she added.

"Yes."

"Your opportunites for observing the sick, the deformed, those that have been operated and those convalescent, have been large have they not?"

"I have seen much of all such conditions."

"Now then, with all these years of opportunity and observation to guide you, would you say that happiness, a contented mental state, and the ability to amuse one's self, to amuse others or perhaps be amused yourself by others is good or bad for your convalescent patients?"

"My long observation as a surgeon could prompt but one honest answer." Immediately there came to my mind, also, my own recent personal experience when, during my convalescence I was unable or unwilling to look upon the hopeful side of my case and to believe my recovery would be possible. It was during this time that Doctor Cuttom staged his own and only greatest show on

earth, with little Peggy, Nick and Baby Billy performing. I now recalled fully the benefit I derived from the amusement thus afforded me at the proper moment. I therefore answered, "It has been my observation that those patients who are contented, who look cheerfully on every phase of life, who are able to pass their time of convalescence by being amused, by amusing themselves or others, not only recover with greater certainty, but do so with greater rapidity."

"During the period of convalescence from operactions, what thought would you say is oftenest uppermost in the patient's mind?"

"Well," I answered reflectively, "it is usually the operations they have had. These are to them something very unusual,—like a journey around the world with shipwreck and daring rescue, a trip in a submarine, or a long flight in an airplane," I added.

"Very well then. If a score of men and women were thrown together after each had experienced something unusual, as for instance a journey from Paris to London in a blimp, or survival after a fall from a balloon in the clouds, would they likely confine their conversation wholly to the early Greek wars or the League of Nations?"

"They would mention neither," I ventured.

"Isn't it a scientific fact," she continued taking a step nearer and greatly emphasizing her words, "that if the people of such a gathering couldn't at once relieve themselves of their insistent, pent-up seething thought of their experience by telling the same, they would explode, have a nervous break-down or a 'brain storm,' as you doctors would say when perplexed for a better explanation?"

"I have had no experience in such instances, but think it highly probable the gathering you mention would run no risk of explosion. It would probably do a deal of talking, each of what seemed to him a most unusual experience; possibly everyone would talk at once——"

"And isn't it equally true that if this same party were confined together for a time, as are convalescents from operations, that their stories and experiences would be repeated over and over again, each time apparently to the added pleasure and benefit of the narrator?"

"That is also probable," I had to confess.

"Assuming then, that—following all operations time is neccessary to convalescence; that patients in seeking recreation during such period are thrown together in the 'sun-parlor' here without provision for entertainment; that each patient be-

lieves he has undergone a most unusual and perhaps dangerous experience, would you say that under such circumstances operated patients would discuss the 'Einstein Theory,' or would they promptly 'cut loose' on the one subject of their constant thought, and speak often and much of nothing but operations?"

"They would speak of operations," I had to confess, "but——"

"Oh, he's with us, he's with *us* all right," Ethel and Elizabeth exclaimed in concert showing great interest and excitement, which ended in their attempt to push me further toward the elevator.

"Report to your waiting members," I said with as much seriousness as I could, again blocking the wheels of the chair, "that I acknowledge the courtesy of their committee and that I approve the wisdom of much that it has presented. Until recently, I must admit that I thought all talking of operations a silly and harmful pastime of convalescents. Since my own operation however I have, strangely enough, been seized with a desire to talk of my personal experiences. I am under promise to Dr. Cuttom not to talk of operations, but you may say that I shall be happy to associate with the members of your proposed society when their intentions are definitely known and their pur-

poses limited wholly to helpful causes. Meanwhile I shall presume to suggest that Doctor Cuttom be invited to address the general meeting, which will no doubt, be called soon for purposes of completing an organization."

CHAPTER XII

I Attend a Meeting

THE Chairman stated that the ultimate aim of the gathering was to complete plans of the proposed Society for Speaking of Operations, but before final steps are taken the committee in charge thought wise to present a short program of entertainment, followed by an address. The committee had been fortunate, she said, in securing little Billy, the "Baby Wonder" who would give one of his inimitable "readings." Miss Short, whose wonderful voice recently had attracted great crowds in grand opera, and who had been the latest talk of the musical world, had consented to sing, in honor of the "guest" ward. The committee after discussing the question widely among the members, had learned that it was the wish of all that she be requested to sing "Smiles," and reported that the young lady had graciously consented to do so. Nick had been invited to recite the "Happy Little Cripple," but unfortunately is yet confined to bed, though rapidly improving. Another number of the entertainment

would be given, it was further stated, by one who is a familiar figure to all present, but the announcement of the name and title was reserved as the surprise of the evening.

The exercise would be closed by an address by Doctor Cuttom, whose long professional career, and intimate familiarity with hospital life especially fitted him to speak as an advisor to this association.

When "Baby Billy" stood proudly before his audience, his red hair bristling and his ruddy, chubby cheeks giving the appearance of perfect health, those who had seen him on former occasions, and had heard him "read" before Doctor Cuttom had wrought his magic art in the repair of his defect, marveled at his fine appearance now, and could scarcely believe this the same boy that once "looked like the lightning had tried to kiss him."

More especially did everyone wonder and rejoice in Billy's good fortune when they now heard him speak in a clear, perfect, childish voice the lines of Eugene Field's "Winkin', Blinkin' and Nod." When the child ceased there was much applause. Especially was there great merriment when the big, jolly old Johnathan Short approached closely to Billy, and, no doubt inten-

tionally, stooped invitingly before him. The child leaped like a little animal astride the neck of his giant friend, clutched one of his big ears in each hand and, holding them like reins drove the smiling, willing captive round the room.

Miss Short sang "Smiles" in a beautiful, rich and tender voice. While she sang, the thought of little Peggy was first in every mind. It was evident from the manner of the singer and the pathos of her interpretation of the song that she, too, was overflowing with sad thoughts of the departed child. The song finished the singer stood with bowed head, as if in reverence, during the moment of profound silence which followed.

All seemed instinctively to feel that this was a period of devotion to the memory of one whose beautiful life reminded them of the glory in the morning clouds.

Following this interval of reverence for Peggy the chairman remarked that, "There probably is no one present who is not familiar with a certain quaint figure who has long labored in the institution. This rather unusual personage," she continued, "has lived most of her life in hospitals. In this environment her eager ears have caught the fragments of many strange stories. Her keen eyes have missed nothing of its daily, somewhat

exciting life. This life if viewed as a whole seems normal and proper enough, but when seen in broken, disconnected bits, as the next speaker observed it, often becomes unusual, uncanny, and sometimes even monstrous. With great ingenuity this rather remarkable woman has woven together the fragments of all she has seen and all she has heard. Out of this, aided by the vivid imagination somewhat characteristic of her race, she has evolved many most unlikely tales, all of which she has dreamed over, and narrated, until she thoroughly believes in them. It is my great pleasure," the chairman said, "to present to you our much beloved old Aunt Mandy who will tell an original story of 'How Doctor Cuttom Changed a Rich Miser into a Great Philanthropist.' "

Amid great applause, the cries of "hurrah for Aunt Mandy," "Bet you Aunt Mandy will tell us a whopper," and others of similar, friendly greetings, the old negress appeared, her face wreathed in smiles and shining as if she had spent the whole day "cleanin' an' polishin' " it to the entire neglect of the hospital furniture.

Probably no one present had ever seen Aunt Mandy when dressed other than in the blue denim, white cap and apron uniform which distinguished her class of service in the institution. Her gro-

tesque appearance now, in contrast with her more somber work clothes caused something of a sensation. The restraint of the hospital once removed, Mandy's fancy evidently had reverted to that primitive state characteristic of the negro in matters of costume, for she must have thought that head gear, waist, sash, skirt and ribbons must vie with each other in points of color and brilliance. Unless Solomon in all his glory had lived among Mandy's ancestors, and had imbibed their peculiar tastes in arrangement of the gaudy colors of their raiment, it is not probable that even he with all his wealth and wisdom ever could have arrayed himself in such fantastic fashion as did Mandy on this occasion.

Undoubtedly she felt that she appeared before friends. Moreover her pride in the belief that she was properly attired and that she knew exactly the words and facts of her story prevented the slightest embarrassment on her part. She began, therefore, in great confidence:

"Ah specs yo' all ain't gwine want ter hear nothin' what ain't de gospel trufe, an' dats sho' what I'se gwine ter tell. How come? Kase ah doan' know no tale what ain't erzactly dat kind. An' ah ain't gwine ter inducate who de miser man was, an' who de good man in de tale is, an' lack-

wise ain't makin' no menshum erbout some er de doins which is pussonel, surfice it being enough to narrate dat de man was fotch inter dis hospital befoh de Christmas time, an' is mos' so sick an' po'ly 'e doan eat an' think none, an' he jes lay an' moan an' complain. An' he doan' know whar he is a-tall cause 'is haid is all so bad mashed an' busted by de automobeel.

"An' when de doctahs come an' feel all ovah de po' busted haid, and cut de hair all offen it an' feel all erround ovah it some moh, an' listen to de heart a-thrubbin' an' say de beatin' doan' soun' de way it or't, an' dat de bones in de haid is all mashed, an' de pieces is stickin' inter de brains an' mussin' dem up, dey look des puzzled and shake dey haids an' say, 'Ain't no use givin' no medicine, an' dey ain't no use op'ratin' an takin' de busted bones erway, cause de man shore am a gwine ter die, lessnen Doc't Cuttom kin come an' do de op'ratenin' an' git all de bone pieces outnen de brains, an' fix de brainsus up, and put back inter de head all de li'l mashed up brain pieces *prezactumly* whar dey belongs so de po' man kin do de restin' an' workin', laughin' an' weepin', an' singin' an' prayin' once moh lak he once do.'

"Presumptly Doct' Cuttom come look at de man an' poun' on de body an' feel all ovah de haid

keerful lak. Den he look outen de winder an' think. An' nex' he shine de *x-rays* machine clean inter de inside de haid so he see prezactumly whar de broken bone pieces is at, an' ef de brains is mussed so bad he can't fix 'em. Prezumptly he look outnen de winder some moh, an' whistle an' say mos'ly to hisse'f, 'Ah ain't gwine ter let dis man die lessnen ah lif' de broken pieces out an fix up de mussy ole brainsus an' cure de sickmuss.'

"Nex' day, aftah Doctah Cuttom done do all de op'ratin' an' fixin' de bones an' brainsuses, de man wuz a sleepin 'an' a actin' lak he shore am gettin' better. An' de nex' day, and de nex', an' de nextest day aftah dat, he mos' shorely *is* a lookin' better, twell finumally bye-um-bye, jes when ah wuz a cleanin' an' polishin' an' a shinin' in de room, an' a thinkin' how lak a lil chile de man is sleepin', an' how good he look, he open de eyes jes lak he been dreamin' an' wake up all skeered an' say, 'Whar is ah at?' An' nex' he look at me an' say, 'Who is yo' all?'

" 'Lordy, lordy, honey,' ah said, all de time a pattin' de po' skinny han', 'Yo' is right in yo' lil' bed in dis here hospital, an ah specks yo' soon is er gwine be soun' an' well. Ah is old Mandy what keeps yo' room all shined an' polished. Doct' Cuttom is already took de busted bonsus out an'

fixed yo' po' haid. Yo' shore is er gwine be well soon' honey!'

"Mos' all de time when de man is gettin' well ebry day, an' kin eat an' think, an' know whar he is at once moh, he is saying, 'Po' Mandy! Po' Mandy works mos' too hard a-cleanin' an' shinin' an' polishin' muh room fo' me!' An' he say furthermo', he is mos' sorry fo' all de men an' de women dat mus work all de time an' kaint stop to rest none. An' he feel so bad fo' de po' li'l childruns dat am sick an' ain't got no good place to go whar dey kin git all de good nurses to honey over 'em, an' de best doctahs dey is to give 'em de right kind er medicine what dey mos'ly needs, an' where deys all de kinds of good things to eat what de li'l folks shorely mus' have to git well. An' he done carry on erbout it all jes de same when he sleep dat he do when he awake, jes lak somethin' worry him in de mind place where de bone pieces wuz, an' whar de brainsus wuz mussed up.

"Presumptly he worry moh an' moh in de mind erbout de folks dats po', an' how sorry he feel fo' dem, twell one day when he seem 'spechumly sorry he say, 'Mandy, hol' out yo' ole black han' and git somethin', but doan' yo' all look at what yo' git twell yo' is gone!' When ah git outnen de

room quick as ah kin, an' all to muhse'f, ah opened de han' lak ah wuz bad skeered to look, an' right dar befoh muh eyes, in muh own han' lay de bigges' yellowes' money shiner dat evah blessed de realm uv ole Mandy's posseshums!

"Mos' ebery day de man seem moh an' moh sorry for de po' an' when de shinin' and polishin' is done, an' befoh ah goes, he say, 'Mandy, hole out yo' han' an' git yo' 'shiner,' twell finumally ah specks ah done got moh shiners dan Doctah Cuttom took bone pieces outnen de man's busted haid. When de shiners keep on a drappin' in muh han', ah wonders how come de man be so good, kase de folks all say befoh de automobeel mash de haid in, an' musst de brainsus up, dat he ain't never done nothin' fo' de po' an' de sick an' de cripplesus, er fer nobody only jist hisse'f. So ah kep' on a-thinkin' erbout de shiners drappin, an' de change what de axumdent make in de man, an' a-listenin' ter what all de folks wuz a-sayin', an' a-puttin' all de little and big scraps uv what ah wuz a-hearin' an seein' an' thinkin' together, twell bye-um-bye one day de young house doctah is a laughin' an' a-talkin' to de man's nurse dat is lookin' purty as she kin, an' laughin' an' talkin' back, an' sayin' she jest caint meck out de curcimstance dat the pashunt uster be a stingy ole grouch, an' now, since

de time Doctah Cuttom done tinker an' fix de brainsus, dat he is jes all diffrumt an' kin talk erbout nothin' only what he want ter do fo' de po' an' de needy. An' de young doctah stopped de laughin' an' smilin' at de purty nurse, an' look serious in de face jes lak he is a-knowin' mor'n Doct' Cuttom hisse'f, an' ack lak he wuz moughty sorry fer de ignorunt nurse. Den he say, dey caint be nothin' meracumlous erbout de circumstance cause its de way it had ter be aftah Doctah Cuttom fixt de brain pieces back inter de man's haid, lak he done at de op'ration.

"De purty nurse blush some kase ah specks she know she am so ignorumpt, an' look funny in de face when he say dis. An' she up an' say she nevah see, an' nevah hear nothin' erbout any such queer doin's befo'. An' de young doctah he look still moh sorry fo' de po' nurse, an' puff hisse'f all up and say he know all erbout it, kase he wuz de main doctah nex' to de one what done de op'ratnin, an dat when Doctah Cuttom pulled all de li'l bone pieces outnen de brains, nex' he tuck out all de brain pieces dat wuz mashed an' busted, an' put de pieces dat come from de thinkin' place in a li'l pile on de table all by itse'f, an pieces what do de sleepin' in a pile all to itsse'f, an all de other li'l brain pieces what do all the other things, in

"An' de young doctah—puff hisse'f all up an' say he know all erbout it kase he was de main doctah nex' to de one what done de op'ratnin." (Page 140)

li'l piles off to theirse'fs. An finumly, when de brain pieces what wuz in de goodness place, an' dem dat wuz in de badness place in de man's haid wuz foun', de doctah wuz mos' keerful ter make two lil piles uv'em so when de time come ter put 'em back inter de haid he ain't gwine ter make no mistake an' git de right pieces in de wrong place.

"But de young doctah tole de nurse dat Doct' Cuttom put back de thinkin' brains pieces in de onliest place whar de thinkin' is done, and dat de sleepin' pieces slip back in de ole places des lak dey nevah been jolted out by de ortomobeel a-runnin' ovah de haid, an' all de other piles uv de brain pieces slip inter dey former recpticulls lak dey is greased, *exceptin' de pile what make de badness.* An' he say furthermoah dat when Doct' Cuttom try to fin' de places in de haid what make de badness he ain't see no sich place whar de badness pieces kin go back no moh, kase de pieces what mek de goodness place in de man's haid already done fill de badness hole plum full!

"When de young doctahs an' de nurses dat help Doctah Cuttom do de op'ratnin' all see de predicamunt Doct' Cuttom sholey am in, dey look funny lak an' say ter 'im, 'What yo' all a-gwine ter do erbout de badness braines pieces what is lef' ovah, an' dey ain't no place to put 'em?'

"Doct' Cuttom he jes laugh some, jes lak he know all de time what he gwine ter do, an' he say he ain't worry none erbout dat, fo' de man sholey is been bad long ernough, an' dat whurfo' he jes am a-gwine ter leave all de stingy brain pieces out, kase ef he do, de man nevah kaint be stingy no moh.

"When ah hears de young doctah say all dat to de purty nurse, ah knows instumptly hits de mos' properest explanashum fo' de reason why de shiners keep on a-drappin inter muh han', an' whurfo' de man go on a-talkin' all de time an' sayin' he done gwine ter give all he bushels an' bushels uv shiners to de po' de needy an' de cripplesus."

As Mandy finished there was loud applause, followed by cries of "Cuttom," "Cuttom! We want an explanation from Cuttom! Tell us how you did it, Doc?"

CHAPTER XIII

I Hear Dr. Cuttom's Address

DOCTOR CUTTOM received the gibes and guffaws of his friends in perfectly good humor. He calmly answered by directing bits of sharp wit and shafts of biting sarcasm toward those whom he believed might be partly responsible for Mandy's story. The doctor, always a master at repartee, quickly silenced the enemy, greatly to the amusement of his main audience.

Since according to the old negress, brain operations have become a matter of trivial simplicity, and the surgeon may now at pleasure take out from the head any undesirable little "pile of brain pieces" and substitute any other little pile that may meet his fancy, the Colonel expressed the wish that for the good of society, he soon might have the pleasure of opening the heads of certain conspirators who are responsible for Mandy's fantastic yarn. In such event he gravely assured his audience, he would put into the heads of these prevaricating culprits an assortment of honest "brain

pieces," selected with such care as to greatly clear the moral atmosphere of the proposed association.

With rare skill and native good humor the Colonel convulsed his audience with laughter by telling both ludicrous and impossible stories which he alleged emanated originally from those who forever talk of operations. With equal skill he brought the gathering to tears by reciting especially pathetic instances of great heroism among his child patients, despite their seemingly impossible handicaps of privation and unthinkable suffering.

"Mandy's story reminds me," the Colonel said, "of an occurrence in my early surgical career which gave rise to equally false and incredulous stories concerning an operation I performed. A boy was brought to my clinic who had been kicked in the head by a horse. He was unconscious and apparently dying. A fracture of the skull with loose pieces of bone were found and the latter removed leaving a large opening in the skull. After a stormy and uncertain course the little fellow recovered, his convalescence requiring a long period in the hospital. During this time the child showed evidence of rare mentality, splendid integrity and fine personality. Everyone learned to

love little Ikey, and to respect his evident talents.

"As the years passed these became more evident. With energy characteristic of many of his race, he secured a sound practical education. A strong native instinct led him toward affairs financial. From messenger he rapidly rose through positions of teller, cashier, vice president, and finally president of a great banking institution, in which last position he was looked upon as a wizard of finance.

"About the time of Ikey's first connection with the bank, and perhaps ten years after the operation on his head, I did a somewhat similar procedure on young Abie, whose skull had been crushed by an automobile. Abie's family was neighbor to Ikey's. Abie was, in comparison to Ikey, uninteresting, stupid, and without definite purpose in life. He made an uneventful, complete recovery from his injury, and the grateful parents sometimes brought him to my office to exhibit his sound condition and rapid growth. On such occasions the proud mother would say, 'See doctor dear, see our little Abie, how fine he iss! Abie iss a smart boy. Sometime he haff much money and be very rich.'

"Time passed and I saw little of Abie until he was fully grown. On rare occasions when I

met the mother the one theme of conversation was that Abie was very smart and that some day he would be very rich and powerful. One day after a very long interval the mother came to my office crying, wringing her hands, intensely perturbed and angry. She burst out at once: 'You haff ruined my Abie, my poor little boy Abie you haff ruined!' She repeated these statements over and over, apparently in a state of hopeless despair. I was, of course dumbfounded, and tried to grasp her meaning. She seemed utterly confused and did not hear, certainly did not answer my questions. Finally I said sharply and in a tone of no uncertain vexation, 'Madam, you say I have ruined Abie. What nonsense is this? I have not seen Abie for many months,—he was then well. How could I have ruined him? Answer me that, Madam! What do you mean? Are you mad?' She made no answer other than to complain more bitterly, and left the office wildly gesticulating as she repeated, 'You haff ruined my Abie, you haff ruined my poor Abie, my poor smart boy.'

"The incident was both puzzling and amazing and I determined to fathom it when time would permit. I saw Abie's father and questioned him. He was sullen, angry, and all he would say was

that I had not treated him right. He admitted that Abie was well, that he had lately engaged in some sort of business, but stoutly maintained that I had not treated his boy right. 'I haff been your friend, doctor, I haff many patients sent you, but you did not treat my poor Abie right.'

"I was more confused than before. From numerous acquaintances and patients, residents of Abie's quarter of the city, I finally obtained a bit of information here, another there, and these when analyzed furnished, I believe, a fairly full and correct explanation of the estrangement of Abie's parents.

"I learned from these sources that little Ikey's strong tendencies toward finance had been observed and much commented upon by the elders and knowing ones almost immediately after his return from the hospital. By the time the young man secured his first position in the bank there was much serious speculation concerning the event, and, when Ikey was, in a comparatively short time, successively advanced from messenger to president the fact created a tremendous sensation in his neighborhood. Many theories were advanced in explanation of how this young man, poor and wholly without influence, had risen so rapidly. None seemed to take into account the

phenomenal energy, ability and essential fitness of the young man himself. One theory which had been put forward, and fully accepted by many, including Abie's parents, connected Ikey's good fortune wholly with a gold plate, which it was asserted was inserted into Ikey's skull where it would forever lay upon his brain, at the time I repaired the injury to his head.

"Abie's mother had noted every step of Ikey's rise to affluence and power. She had long ago heard the story of the gold plate on his brain and had thoroughly believed this the sole cause of the young man's rise to fortune. Knowing that her Abie and the fortunate Ikey had been similarly injured in the head, and that the two children had been similarly operated, she reasoned that, as a matter of course, I must of necessity have filled the gap in Abie's skull with gold and she therefore confidently believed the effect would be exactly the same on his developing mental tendencies as it had been on Ikey, especially in its relation to money.

"The poor woman awaited, therefore, with great anxiety the time when Abie should attain the age of Ikey when the latter obtained his first position in the bank, and when her boy should inevitably follow Ikey's footsteps. When, how-

ever that period in Abie's young life arrived and the boy exhibited no interest whatever in a career as banker the mother was greatly perplexed and sorely disappointed. Still later when the young man refused to be at all concerned with things financial, she became completely prostrated with grief and despondency over the failure of her son, and the apparently hopeless outlook for the future welfare of the family.

"While the mother continued in this deplorable state of grief Abie quietly established himself as a merchant in scrap iron. Coincident with his business venture, a neighbor who had been much in hospitals, who had been much operated and who was especially gifted in the art of too much speaking of operations, started the story that he himself was in the hospital at the same time Abie's skull was repaired, and that it was a fact well known to him and others that on that occasion Doctor Cuttom, after preparing the opening in the skull into which a gold plate should be fitted, found that there was no such plate in the hospital at the time, and, since the missing bone must in some way be replaced, he had substituted an iron disc for the gold one usually employed in such cases.

"The narrator of this story stated it as a further fact that whereas it was wholly to be expected that Ikey, who wore the gold plate next to his developing brain, must of necessity become a financier, it was equally natural and certain that Abie, wearing the iron disc could think only of the baser metal, and hence could become nothing more than a dealer in old iron.

"Abie's mother heard this story of the substituted iron plate and its baneful effect on her child. She believed it fully and became more wildly hysterical than before. Furthermore she at once became bitter toward me for using an iron plate, whereas a gold one was the only proper means of repairing the break in the skull of her precious boy. It was at this time that the distressed creature visited my office and complained bitterly that I had ruined her Abie. To this day she lays all her misfortunes to me, and to the iron plate which she still believes I maliciously inserted into Abie's skull."

As to the organization of any society in this hospital to promote "speaking of operations," he was until recently, he said, frankly opposed. He had always looked upon talk of this kind as shallow, unwise and silly. It stands first, he believed, among the many channels through which

false conceptions of everything surgical is spread. He cited as an example what the chairman had well and truthfully stated, that Aunt Mandy had listened to bits of some yarn to-day, and had to-morrow caught but the shadow of real truth concerning what was alleged to have been some marvelous operation. Then, wholly out of her imaginative old head she had forthwith spun an improbable story which she proceeded to tell as a fact.

Proceeding in his well known ironical manner he stated that although he had always objected to the craze of patients for speaking of operations he nevertheless wished to be just in his criticism and would therefore not oppose any influence that would hasten the recovery of those who have been operated. Recently he had conferred on this subject with his friend Doctor Richard Smith, who has been a patient in this hospital for several weeks and has, therefore, been able to give the question serious thought based upon personal experience and actual observation. Doctor Smith had convinced him, he admitted, that the convalescent patient is often actusually benefited by the much inane, often foolish, talk that goes on continually among them. He had compared the convalescent period of the

patient to recovery from an anaesthetic. In coming out from ether, for instance, the deeper and faster the patient breathes the sooner is he recovered from its poisonous effects. Similarly after an operation, the more the patient talks about it, and the more wisdom he assumes in his talking, the sooner he is well. So much was Doctor Smith impressed by this belief, the speaker said, that from it he had made the rather positive deduction that the patient in many instances really seems to stand little chance of normal recovery from his operation until he has first talked himself completely out concerning it. The degree of progress toward final recovery can often be accurately estimated on any given day of convalescence, according to Doctor Smith, by the amount of talking about operations the patient seems determined to do.

Granting that Doctor Smith's theories are true the speaker still believed, he stoutly asserted, that the scope and quantity of all such talk should be somewhat limited, especially after the patient is pretty well talked out, and is therefore near recovery. At this period when restored health is assured it would be highly proper and wise for convalescents to limit conversation to a contem-

plation of the forces that have made restoration to health possible.

"The 'guest' ward here is but a fraction in size of what it should be to accommodate all the children who, crippled and deformed as were Billy, Nick and Peggy must receive highly specialized care," Doctor Cuttom continued in a more personal, sympathetic manner. "Partly because of this inadequate provision for their care and partly because of the total indifference of many parents to child defects, a majority of such children receive no help whatever, and many of them ultimately become a charge upon society." He quoted Miss Short's estimate that dollars wisely spent in correcting infant defects would save the comparatively useless expenditure of fortunes by society later on.

In view of these and other facts the Colonel suggested that if the proposed association must speak of operations that it should greatly limit the discussion to questions of providing means to the end that curable defectives may receive the highest type of service at a proper time.

As an example of what may be accomplished by early action, and of the hopeless, humiliating outcome which results from indifference and procrastination, the speaker compared the cases of

little Billy and Aunt Johnnie. "The cure of the 'Baby Wonder' will enable the child to take his proper place along with normal children, and society may be assured that he will likely attain respectable or even honored citizenship. Billy's case was not exceptional. All who are like Billy can and should be cured. Aunt Johnnie could have been cured had she received proper care when at Billy's age, and the fact that she did not have such attention is a stigma on the social status of her time.

"It is fortunate in a way that all who are present have had personal operative experience, for this gives you a knowledge and fills you with an enthusiasm concerning the subject which is impossible to others. You are most able," the Doctor went on, "because of your experience and interest in operations to take up the problems of those who are crippled and deformed and to bring them before the public so insistently that early and wise action may be secured in their behalf.

"You have all been charmed by Miss Short's voice. You are familiar with the fact that she has given up Grand Opera at a time when success was an assured fact; but you possibly may not know that she made this almost unbelievable sacrifice for the sole purpose of devoting her life to

social service, in which field she may scientifically bring about results for these children which would be wholly impossible through indiscriminate, disjointed effort. But she cannot do this unaided. An association such as you may form could be an asset to her that would insure as yet undreamed of benefits."

"I am now most happily able to make two important announcements," Doctor Cuttom continued. "The first is that through the influence of Miss Short a certain rich man became greatly interested in Nick, Billy and Peggy. This gentleman has always been looked upon as a miser, whose interest in suffering humanity was nothing. As is often true of others, the public has greatly misjudged the true nature and intent of the man whose name in this present connection will never be known. He has always been most generous in hidden useful ways and has now determined to give all his wealth for the purpose of building a children's hospital, to be known as the 'Peggy Memorial.'

"The second announcement might seem, since listening to Aunt Mandy's story just now, to be connected with the most marvelous mastery of modern Surgery. Of course, as I have already tried to indicate, this story is but a fanciful yarn.

However, when told by Aunt Mandy on this occasion it might be given too much credence if not partly discredited by the actual facts, as I of course know them.

"Being entirely human, I should be pleased, were it possible for me to take a selfish financier such as Mandy has described, and, by operation on his brain be able to convert him into a man of goodness and philanthropy. It is not necessary to say that any such change is impossible through operative measures. The change wrought in Mr. Jones's case was only indirectly due to the surgical operations which I performed on him. While this gentleman was in the hospital awaiting his recovery he noted and analyzed the many forces that are necessary in the conduct of an institution dedicated to the cure of the sick. Never before had he given any thought to this subject. His whole life had been devoted to the single object of making money. His enforced idleness here gave him time to think. Through Destiny of chance, Peggy, Nick and Billy came into his life. From them and from those that care for them there emanated an influence, subtle, not wholly explicable but nevertheless real, that changed the mental attitude of this perhaps always good, but heretofore wholly indifferent man.

"Therefore it was from the 'guest' ward, from Aunt Johnnie's unselfish service, from Miss Short's sacrifice, and from the crippled, helpless children that there came an influence unseen, perhaps uninvited, but powerful enough to change the very nature of a strong minded, iron-willed financier to a gentle, benevolent worker for the unfortunate. It is wholly true that Mr. Jones of room 107 is now another man, a changed man, a better man, since his confinement in the hospital. As a result of this confinement, of the influences which have surrounded him while here, there has been opened to him an entirely new view of life. He wishes henceforth to forget himself in his earnest efforts to do good for others. Mr. Sylvester Jones, Mandy's hero of the 'yellow shiners,' the man who has been so completely converted has authorized me to say that he is now ready to endow very liberally the 'Peggy Memorial Hospital' which soon will be erected and dedicated to the treatment of crippled and defective children.

"You who have suffered, who have been operated and have experienced somewhat similar even though less change from your confinement here, must feel in unison with Mr. Jones that your future demands of you a greater, broader and more useful service to others.

"You of the proposed association have been fortunate during the trying ordeals through which you have so recently passed in having provided for you perhaps every necessary personal comfort. Others in the hospital at the same time whose surgical trials were as great, perhaps even greater than yours, have had no means of their own to supply even the simplest though most necessary want. Of these your association will wish to give consideration. Some of you have visited the 'guest' ward, have sympathized with its purpose and already know what these needs are. I can testify that some have been so much impressed by the children there, and their respective wants, that they already have determined to undertake a definite line of service. In this society which you now propose, you can have an opportunity unequaled to talk less about operations and to do more that is necessary to promote the welfare of those who must be operated. I predict that your association will find inexpressible joy in the dedication of its service to Aunt Johnnie and to Miss Short and her staff, to the end that the 'Peggy Memorial Hospital' may for all time be of inestimable service to hosts of children like Nick, Peggy and Billy, who though crippled, de-

fective and 'wuthless' were yet in some unknown way powerful enough to change great financiers and misers into practical philanthropists."

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